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# BENITO MUSSOLINI

AN INTRODUCTION  
TO THE STUDY OF  
F A S C I S M

BY

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## PREFACE

LEST the following sketch should be regarded as an impertinence on the part of an ordinary parish priest not living in Italy, and without the privilege of any personal acquaintance with its people, I may venture to explain how it was that I came to think of publishing it.

During a six months' absence from my parish a friend put into my hands a copy of Luigi Villari's well-known work, *The Awakening of Italy: the Fascista Regeneration*. And after becoming engrossed in the study of the movement I soon fell under the fascination of the man who has made that movement what it is, and who is now hard at work carrying it out, and carrying it up into the very Constitution itself.

Last April, after reading a Paper on this subject at a meeting of my clerical brethren,\* the latter pressed me to publish it; and that is how the following pages, which are, of course, an expansion of the Paper, came to appear in print.

Meantime in attempting to portray the tendencies and events of the past twenty years in Italy, my aim has been to provide, for anyone who may care to have it, a modest introduction to the study of the Fascista Regeneration, and particularly to Luigi Villari's important work itself; placing myself for the most part under that author's guidance—the guidance, that is, of one who is in a position to understand his own country, and to appreciate, more easily than a mere stranger can, the significance of a movement—one of the most remarkable in modern times—that is engaging the attention of all political thinkers in Europe, and that has done so much already to regenerate the country of which he has proved himself so distinguished a servant.

\* The Stow Clerical Society.

Luigi Villari, officer of the Crown of Italy, Chevalier of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, who has won for himself the several distinctions of the Italian Croce di Guerra, the British Military Cross, and the French Croix de Guerre, served during the Great War as liaison officer with the allied armies in Macedonia, and, after the Armistice, at Constantinople; acted as Secretary of the Inter-Allied Commission at Smyrna, is a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, a member of the Staff of the League of Nations, and was attached formerly to the Italian Foreign Office.

After a careful study of this author and of other works, I am attempting in these pages to convey to the reader's mind the impression of the entire situation they have produced upon my own; but without assuming, of course, an imprimatur on their part to every inference or comment I have been led to make.

For information and enlightenment on the most recent developments of Fascismo—a condition described sometimes as its Third Moment—I desire to express my obligations to the Rome correspondent of *The Tablet*, who, living on the spot and recording his impression of events, week by week, as they pass, with an evident desire to do justice to all sides of the question, is in less danger than mere strangers, who visit the country for a moment, of reading texts apart from their contexts, and of viewing aspects of the question apart from their proper setting.

My special thanks are due to Mr. Luigi Villari for honouring me by consenting to read my manuscript, and still more by the encouragement he has given me to publish it.

S. J.

THE RECTORY,  
MORETON-IN-MARSH.  
March 30, 1927.

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# BENITO MUSSOLINI

## PART I

### ITALY BEFORE THE WAR

#### CHAPTER I

##### CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONDITIONS

It is not easy at once to realise how swift Signor Mussolini's course has been, how many various events have been crowded into a small compass of time, and what a chapter his life is providing in the history of his own country, and indeed of the world. And we shall soon be out of breath if we try to keep pace with a career which, after opening in a blacksmith's shop in the Commune of Predappio—the actual date of his birth was July 29, 1883—culminated thirty-nine years later, in 1922, in a call to the highest position in the State—the position of Prime Minister of Italy.

Had we to produce Mussolini on the film, we should explain at the outset that, having sprung originally from the class of small peasants, he had received a rather better education than his neighbours; and then films might follow one another in a succession somewhat like this :

#### PART I.

##### *Mussolini:*

1. As an elementary school teacher.
2. As a candidate in the Municipal Elections.

3. As a fugitive from his native country into Switzerland.
4. At Lausanne, working as a navvy by day; and attending a course of University lectures to obtain his diploma as a teacher of French by night.
5. At Trento, sitting at his desk as the Editor of the *Avvenire*, and as a contributor to Battisti's paper *Il Popolo*.
6. Signing on as a member of the Socialist party.
7. On the occasion of the dramatic scene of his arrest, when Austria expels him from the country as a dangerous revolutionist.
8. At the Socialist Congress at Reggio Emilia in 1912—he is seen taking a leading part in the agitation.
9. As one in a vast assembly of his fellow-Socialists, being singled out for the distinguished position of Editor of the *Avanti*.
10. As a leading agitator haranguing the mob during the Socialist troubles in Romagna.

This might conclude Part I.; and the second part might open with the general description on the curtain : The Dawn of Another Day. Mussolini now enters upon another phase in his career, and begins to criticise his comrades.

## PART II.

1. He is seen in the attitude of one staggered by the news of the Great War in Europe in 1914.  
“ Surely Socialism is against war; surely . . . and yet——”

2. Confronted by his Socialist comrades, he confronts them in his turn.
3. On the occasion of his excommunication from the ranks of the Socialist party.
4. His parting words and challenge to his Socialist comrades : " All are cowards who hold back at this juncture."
5. Mussolini in the trenches.
6. With the Fascista Band. After forty-eight hours' notice to the Government they set out on their mission of cleaning up all the criminal communes in the country.
7. Administering doses of castor oil to the delinquents.
8. Mussolini and the march on Rome : " Either the Government will be given to us or we shall seize it by marching on Rome."
9. Face to face with the King : " I bring to Your Majesty the Italy of Vittorio Veneto, reconsecrated by the new victory. . . ."
10. Addressing his men after the march : " We have found our Fatherland again."
11. Mussolini's first circular to the Prefects : " I demand that all officials, from the highest to the lowest, shall do their duty intelligently and with absolute devotion to the supreme interests of the country. I shall set the example."

So much for the film; and now when we turn to the fact we shall find that the special circumstances and conditions of the time called for something special in the man that was to meet them.

In other words, the man himself and the movement

of which he has been the inspiring genius "must be studied as a feature, albeit a most important one, in the general picture of Italian political and economic history since the outbreak of the world war."

Broadly speaking, the entire period may be said to distribute itself into three main divisions: Italy before the war; Italy during the war; and Italy after the war. In the first division the movement begins to show itself; in the second it begins to shape itself; and in the third it begins to settle itself.

**THE POSITION OF PARTIES.**—Before the war the conditions of the world outside were special, so also was the position of parties at home; while the countenance of Italy wore a blasé look about it, as of a country exhausted by its own brilliant past, and not yet awake and alive to the conditions of the present or to the possibilities of the future.

Meantime she had come to be at the mercy of various small groups or parties, each with its own grievance and each with a leader of its own to represent it; at the mercy, too, of politicians often too fond of office to resist the temptation of playing off one party against another; while the Government itself was changing hands constantly, and the business of Government degenerating into a mere scramble for power.

**THE SOCIALISTS.**—To this general condition there was one exception—namely, the Socialist party—which stood out from all the rest as the dominant party of the day; a party which, after coming to the front in the latter half of the nineteenth century, had become more conspicuous still in the beginning of the twentieth; an exception to the other parties inasmuch as it claimed to represent the wants and needs of the general multitude

and not merely those of a particular group; a party which was producing at length "a new type of Socialist," destined in the future to provide a kind of pivot on which all the strike movements were to turn—viz., the paid secretary of the Labour Union.

Instead of perceiving that the whole country had a grievance, even though its grievance might bear more heavily upon the working classes than upon the rest; or, in other words, that the poverty of the working classes was due largely to the poverty of the country as a whole, this party, persuading itself that the question before them was a class question merely, began to preach the dangerous doctrine of class warfare, with the prescription of Socialism as the one sovereign solution of all. According to the Socialist contention, the whole system of Capitalism is cruel and crushing; private ownership as such is an injustice and an outrage, and must simply disappear, leaving the ground for the State to step in and to make itself the owner of all the means of production, distribution, and exchange. With influences of this kind at work and prevailing for some time, without anything to counteract them, and with a Government too often conniving, Socialism grew rapidly in power and in organisation, and strikes soon became the order, or the disorder, of the day, until the country itself was brought to the verge of ruin. So true is this that during the years 1904-1908, when the fever was beginning to rage, there were, at one point of time, as many as 800 strikes going on at once.

Strikers are apt to be so occupied with their grievances as not to realise the misery they are bringing upon others, or indeed upon themselves; and in the very first year of this period, on the occasion of the

General Strike in 1904, the multitude of people not merely resented this tyranny, but actually turned round upon the strikers with their sticks, and so began a movement of reaction, destined to culminate fifteen years later—four months after the Armistice—in the formal organisation of the Fascista band, with Mussolini at the head of it.

The *Corriera della Sera*, one of the chief organs in Italy, at once saw the significance of this, declaring that "those sticks were destined to make a wonderful career." Meantime, in that early stage, the people had no leader to put things into shape and to represent them.

The Nationalist Movement of five years later certainly was a step in the right direction; and in the person of its famous leader, Enrico Corradini, "a veritable apostle," as Luigi Villari describes him, we recognise one who is following the movement to-day as faithfully as he was attempting to give it a lead in its earliest stage fifteen years ago, and who, as recently as October, 1925, made an able contribution to its literature in the shape of an article on the subject of its more recent developments.

Under his leadership the Nationalist Movement, set on foot at the Florence Congress in 1910, was carried on by a band of young men, mostly of the middle classes; men conscious of the corruption of the Government of their day, resenting deeply the anti-patriotic spirit that was being encouraged throughout the country, and alive to the grave danger of a class warfare rapidly ripening into a chronic condition, with its delusions of a Socialism that for some time past had been undermining the character of the nation and threatening the very Constitution itself.

Like their leader, these were men of integrity and of intelligence, inspired by the national ideal, but with this drawback, that their contribution, important though it was, identified itself mainly with one class of the community, and did not represent the whole.

A GOVERNMENT THAT GIVES WAY.—Meantime the Government of the moment affected a certain superiority to all this—*au dessus de la mêlée* was the convenient but intensely aggravating formula for this attitude—as if it were the mere petty squabbling of children, and that if you gave them rope enough sooner or later they would hang themselves; until at length the Socialist party found themselves with rope enough to hang the whole community, and with a Government under them rather than over them, becoming more and more afraid to face them, willing to indulge in deals, and paying to keep itself in power.

Under these conditions and in a mood such as this, the striker, even where he has not yet learnt to hate it, ceases to think of his country as such, and comes almost to forget that there is any other; his patriotism is not repudiated perhaps, but dies of atrophy, or, shall we say, simply evaporates, leaving the mind an easy prey to the propaganda of the Socialist, and a congenial soil for those seeds of pacifism and of anti-patriotism that Socialism itself is so eager to sow.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FATHERLAND FORGOTTEN

IN one way or another, then, with few exceptions, the country had come to think little of itself and still less of its relations with other countries; there were wars and rumours of wars, of course, in the world outside; and Italy had been damaged in her prestige quite recently in a badly managed war with Abyssinia; but the multitude of her people, who seldom went outside the country or heard much of what went on there, seemed scarcely to heed it. Or if they were aware of it, they thought it unlikely that wars would come their way again. Meantime these wars were a mistake, and perhaps the Socialists were right in protesting that wars were mere "unproductive expenditure"; and if they were right also in denouncing the Capitalists as the men who make the wars, perhaps the best way would be to make war on the Capitalists.

It would not be true to say that there were no signs of improvement anywhere in the moment before the Great War; and if the extension of the franchise in 1913 had resulted in an increase of the Socialist vote, we must not forget, on the other hand, the withdrawal by the Pope in that same year of what is known as the "non expedit," whereby the way was opened once again for Catholics to record their votes, and so for the return at the next election of thirty-three of their number as deputies—a new condition of things which must have operated at once as some check upon the revolutionary

tendencies of the time. And had he been supported adequately, Salandra, the Prime Minister of the moment, an able man of the highest integrity, might have been able to cope with the serious riots, spreading just then to all the chief cities of Italy, even to Rome itself.

As things were, the people were left at first to protect themselves and to clear the streets of revolutionaries, until such time as the troops could come up to complete the work.

With encouragement of this kind the Government began to show a firmer front, and after punishing some of the strike leaders, when another section of their own men threatened to strike again if their brethren were not released, the authorities met the challenge by calling back the 1891 class of soldiers to the colours.

ITALY UNPREPARED.—Nevertheless, on the whole, at a point of time when all the other nations of Europe were strengthening their forces, when France was preparing evidently for the worst and Great Britain was strengthening her Navy, when Germany and Russia were developing huge armies, and when Austria was threatening Italy at her very door, when at length the hour struck, and the distant roll of the thunder began to be heard in Belgium, there was one nation that seemed still to be asleep, one country to be unprepared and undefended.

In the case of Italy and Austria, indeed, the relations which had been special for nearly half a century were soon to assume conditions of the gravest anxiety. With a boundary-line left as it had been at the end of the wars of independence in 1866—a line as awkward and as irritating as it appeared certainly to be unfair; with

a wedge of Austrian territory driven deep into what Italy claimed as her own borders; and with whole populations of Italians subjected to the pressure and persecution of a ruler whose sway they deeply resented, Italy stood silent, while her hereditary enemy, nominally an ally, was building fortifications before her very eyes, and without any attempt to conceal his motive in doing so.

And even with those Italians who had to live under the immediate pressure of this worry, long custom had dulled their sense of its significance, and nothing seemed to remain but for the country to acquiesce in a condition that had defied the efforts of statesmen and diplomatists for years past, either to mitigate or to remove it.

Meantime at home Italy found herself with a working class population for the most part under the influence, and to some extent already under the heel of the Socialist party, with pacifism almost for its profession; with an aristocracy only beginning to give its mind to the higher questions of national or international importance; with the middle classes mostly living on a lower plane of thought and in a narrow groove of their own; with the nucleus, certainly, of a splendid army, but with a nucleus only; and all this with the prospect before it of a war on a scale so appalling as to stupefy even those nations who had been dreaming of it for years, and so astounding to the Italian people themselves that for some time they were simply unable to take it in.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE.—But the day had come at length when Italy had to take it in, when she had to rub her eyes and to ask herself what she was to do. As matters stood she was in alliance, of course, with

Germany and Austria—the Triple Alliance as it was termed—an alliance to which she had been driven by the unfriendly attitude of France in more recent years, and which had never been popular for reasons we have given already. And when she recalled what it was that had provoked the war at the outset, and the lengths to which that provocation was being pushed in Belgium and in France at the moment, her sympathies went out to the Entente; and a great sigh of relief went up throughout the country when the declaration of neutrality was signed on August 2, 1914. And yet tremendous though this decision certainly was, it served only to make way for another question equally grave: Was Italy to continue neutral? Could she so continue even though she wished it, under the conditions of the moment?

And if not, how was she to intervene, with almost no army in hand, and with the several sections of the community so various and so contradictory in their leanings?

## CHAPTER III

### SAVIOURS OF THEIR COUNTRY

It was at this juncture and under conditions so critical as this that Italy's great men came forward to give her the lead that she needed; and with Salandra at the helm, Sonnino at the Foreign Office, Cadorna in charge of the Army, and—most amazing of all—Mussolini soon to come out and to convince the country, she was able to face her future.

Sonnino, one of the first intellects in Italy, with a deep love of his country and a character beyond reproach, brought with him what was so needed at the moment, a thorough grasp of financial, economic, and international problems; while Cadorna, one of her most distinguished soldiers, was destined to perform the miracle of raising a mighty Italian army out of almost nothing in the course of ten months—one of the great achievements of the war.

But the heavy task of lifting the weight of indifference and converting the country fell mainly upon Mussolini.

THE MAN AND THE MOMENT.—The moment had arrived, and the man had come forward to meet it: Mussolini stood to attention, made his salute, and came over to the side of his king and his country—a change of front which seemed, at first sight, to be sudden, and even to stagger those who were looking on, but, like many conversions of the kind, not really so sudden as it seemed.

Only a few years before his birth, during the years

1875-1880, Mussolini's father had imbibed revolutionary ideas; and after opening his blacksmith's shop had set about spreading Internationalist doctrine and founding a revolutionary group, which had to be broken up soon afterwards by the police. And on the birth of his son, destined another day to be the famous Prime Minister of Italy, he named him Benito, after a Mexican revolutionary of that name, who had led the revolt against the Emperor Maximilian; and another son also he named after another revolutionary; so that we may say of Mussolini that he was born in an atmosphere of revolution and imbibed revolutionary ideas with his mother's milk.

When the Socialists came to the front, then, twenty years later, as the one outstanding party of the time, the only party, in fact, with a prescription for ills of which everyone was conscious, he threw in his lot with them at once and became a power, as he was bound to do. But never quite at home in his new setting, he began soon to be critical of his comrades—an attitude they were disposed to resent—so much so that as early as the year 1912, the year when he was appointed Editor of the Socialist organ *Avanti*, Mussolini began to be irritated by the opportunism of the party and to resent, and indeed successfully to resist, the attempt of the Freemasons to dominate its counsels; and all this with the result that when the war broke out and the thoughts of many hearts were revealed, he broke out also, and soon broke away from his fellows.

Having fallen in with the Socialists at first as a matter of course, he fell out with them now as a matter of conviction—the conviction, namely, that the policy of that party, especially in the enervating atmosphere of

a succession of Governments, all of them too feeble to withstand it, was entering like poison into the very veins of the country and threatening the Constitution itself; that the question all Italy had to face was no mere party question, but a national, nay, as events were proving, an international question; and that "a pusillanimous pacifism" was not the way to peace, either at home or abroad.

His Socialist suit had been a tight fit to start with and soon began to tear—as soon as he began to move, in fact, and his has been a moving figure from the first, until at length on the outbreak of war the rent was made worse, and left him no choice but to change it. Nor was there any inconsistency in this: intellectually speaking, he had grown out of his clothes—a condition which others had foreseen long before he saw it himself; in fact, nearly three years before the French Socialist, Georges Sorel, had written of him: "Our Mussolini is not an ordinary Socialist. Believe me, you may perhaps one day see him at the head of a sacred battalion, saluting with drawn sword the Italian flag. . . . It is not yet known, but he is the only energetic man capable of repairing the weakness of the Government."

Viewing things now from a higher standpoint, and in an atmosphere more serious and more serene, he saw the problem of the war outside and that of the war within as but two aspects of one question; and the task he had before him was to make his comrades and his country see it also.

Some men can do execution with their pens and some when they stand up to speak; others, again, are men of action who cannot write or make a speech: Mussolini and the soldier poet D'Annunzio could do all three.

One who has resided in Italy and knows it well writes :  
“ Perhaps in no other country in the world could it have happened that at such a moment a poet should indicate the course and take the helm. At the rock of Quarto, where Garibaldi had embarked with his thousand for the Sicilian expedition, D’Annunzio began his apostolate with a speech to the Ligurians which went to the heart of the country; a second and a third speech followed, and an enthusiastic crowd welcomed the orator to Rome.”

It was due, then, largely to the efforts of these two distinguished men—D’Annunzio addressing himself to the literary classes and Mussolini to the general multitude—that the country eventually came round.

Meantime, after pausing for a moment in a vain attempt to convince his Socialist comrades, Mussolini, after resigning his editorship of the *Avanti*, commenced on November 15, 1914, the publication of a new organ, *Il Popolo d’Italia*, a daily paper edited in his behalf by his brother to-day, and devoted then particularly to the policy of intervention; while ten days later, when his comrades had solemnly excommunicated him from their ranks, he confronted them with a famous and stirring speech, and in what may be termed words of farewell to his fellows : “ I tell you from this moment that I shall have no compunction, no pity for all those who in this tragic hour will not speak out frankly, for fear of hisses or cries of *Abasso!* ”

“ I shall have no compunction, no pity at all for those who are reticent, for all those who are cowards ” (*Discorsi Politici*, Milan, 1921, p. 17, quoted by L. Villari). “ From this moment ! ”—November 14, 1914, four months after war had broken out in Europe—it is



Mussolini himself who marks the point of time; Italy is to take a new departure, to turn over a new leaf, and to begin a new chapter in her history, with himself to stand by her and help her to write it.

With his face towards the masses, his great campaign in favour of intervention was now to begin; from this moment his pen was to be busy at work in his paper *Popolo d'Italia*; and in his speech at Parma, the very next month, he could point his Italian comrades to the example of the German Socialists, a body of men hitherto the support of the old Working Class International, and now "falling into the ranks behind the Kaiser's banner to a man"—a broad hint to themselves to follow suit.

"The German National Unanimity," he declared, "has automatically determined the unanimity of other countries."

And in the days then to come, the momentous days following upon Mussolini's change, we may read the history mainly of those angry and anxious contests between neutralists and interventionists that were to issue five months later, on May 24, 1915, in the declaration of war with Austria-Hungary, and later on, August 27, 1916, with Germany also.

## PART II

# ITALY DURING THE WAR

### CHAPTER IV

#### PACIFISM AND PATRIOTISM

IN considering these contests between neutralists and interventionists, whether in Italy itself or as they were reflected in the other countries of the world, we must not forget to distinguish between the pleas and formulas addressed by the Pope under a deep sense of responsibility, "To the People now at War" or "To the Leaders of the Belligerent Powers," on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the propaganda of the pacifist who objects to fighting under any circumstances and has persuaded himself that wars as such are evil.

No Catholic, for example, would be allowed to teach that wars as such are evil, although he might distinguish between wars and wars, and would say probably that the evil lay deeper, not in the war as such, but in the mischief that led to the war; and no man of goodwill, who has been careful to ascertain the truth, can doubt, I think, that it was his failure to stay the mischief and so to prevent the war that hastened the death of Pius X.; or that his successor, Benedict XV., pursuing the same policy, devoted all his powers to the task of alleviating suffering—to use his own words—"without distinction of persons, nationality, or religion," of praying that "counsels of meekness might prevail," and, when occasions seemed to offer, of proposing terms which at least might prepare the way for peace.

PEACEMAKERS AND MISCHIEF-MAKERS. — One such

occasion seemed to present itself in the summer of 1917—a year so dark and so desperate for Italy : only in the spring before a revolution had brought down the Russian Army with a crash on one front, and pacifists were busy putting about a prophecy that another revolution would soon bring down Italy's Army on another front.

Meantime a minority group of Socialists at Florence, who were throwing in their lot with Russian Bolsheviks, were laying themselves out to undermine the morale of the Italian soldiers; and one who was British Ambassador in Rome at the time has told us recently of the serious mischief that had been going on at Turin, and how all this was affecting the Army at the front :

“ Here for many months,” he writes, “ a persistent anti-military propaganda had undermined the morale of peasant soldiers with little or no knowledge of international conditions, whose restricted outlook had never conceived those ideals of the war which in our country had brought millions of volunteers to the flag. . . . The old professional soldiers had been to a great extent killed or disabled. . . . The new officers were not in touch with their men, and had little hold upon them. Into this army had been drafted the men strongly impregnated with the doctrines disseminated by the extreme Socialists, who had been compromised in the serious riots at Turin and elsewhere, and who were sent as a punitive measure to the colours. Coming from industrial cities where they had learnt the catechism of their instructors, they became centres of infection, preaching pacifism and even sabotage. . . .” Indeed, the Socialist Deputy, Claudio Treves, went so far as to say in the Chamber : “ Next winter not another man will be in the trenches.”

And quite apart from this, and yet as providing an atmosphere not uncongenial to it, things were looking black everywhere, and the various armies seemed to be at a standstill: the French and British forces, after suffering terrible losses, were making little or no impression in France; many were asking almost in despair whether America would ever come in, and the counsels of those who had the conduct of the war were known just then to be confused.

Some months before, at the end of 1916, Lloyd George had favoured an offensive on the Italian front as the line, apparently, of least resistance—a plan not only approved by Cadorna, but one which he deemed likely to meet ultimately with success by “driving a wedge into the flank of the dual monarchy.” But for this purpose he required another eight divisions, and the loan of some 300 guns from the French—a loan which they were prepared to grant only on condition that the guns should be returned to France by the following April—a condition that rendered the project impossible.

To-day, viewing that moment as we do, in the light of subsequent events, we are in danger, as Mr. Belloc would say, of “reading history backwards”; but actually at the time, after three long years of the most terrible fighting the world had ever known, it was inevitable that those who were looking on, whether pacifists or patriots, should ask what purpose this appalling slaughter could serve, and whether some other way could not be found of bringing it to an end.

When at this juncture, therefore, only a week or so after the Socialist Deputy's speech, the Pope's famous Letter appeared, with its address “To the Leaders of the Belligerent Peoples,” and with its declaration in so

many words that "the terrible struggle seemed more and more to be a useless slaughter," it was only too easy under the circumstances and with his words divorced from their context to press them into the service of the pacifist propaganda at the front—"Do you hear what the Pope has just said?"—and so to employ them for a purpose for which they were never intended, and to which the Pope himself would have been the last to lend his sanction.

And so again with America's entrance into the war: the truth as to this aspect is coming gradually to light with the various Memoirs that are being published. That country evidently had done its utmost to prevent the war at the outset, and whatever may be thought of President Wilson's line of policy, it is equally certain that he did his utmost afterwards to pull it up and to stop it; the sinking of the *Lusitania* had shaken his resolution as it did that of Italy in 1915, and in the following year the ruthless submarine attack served to convince him that America must come in. Meantime he hesitated again, in the hope of being able to detach Austria from Germany, to come forward as a neutral, and to propose to Germany and to her enemies acceptable terms of peace.

Lord Grey asks to-day whether such a termination to the war might not have proved a happier and more satisfactory ending than the so-called peace that had to wait for another two years—years that were to bring in their train the appalling catastrophe of the Russian Revolution with the deadly persecution that followed it, and with consequences that are extending themselves to-day to every country in Europe, and beyond it.

As it was, two courses seemed still to remain to

America, and there would be a wide divergence of opinion as to which of the two was to be preferred : she might decide to cut off supplies to all countries alike, and so to stop the combatants by starving them ; or, on the other hand, to intervene and by pouring all her forces into the firing-line to wind up the drama with a speedy and decisive victory for the Allies.\*

If we assume with the British Ambassador, who was in Rome at the time, that the former policy, that of cutting off supplies, was being urged by the Vatican upon America, when the latter was contemplating coming into the war, this would show that the Pope was convinced that the terrible slaughter could be brought to a stop more speedily and with a greater saving of sacrifice in that way, while it would in no wise impugn the soundness of his motive, or that line of impartiality to which he adhered so consistently throughout.

In any case, the solemn warnings addressed to the Government by Cadorna in June and July, 1917, as to the evil work going on in the lines were left unheeded, with disastrous results ; so much so that when the great Austro-German offensive was launched on October 23 of that year, after making allowance for some military blunders, there seems no doubt that "the defeatist propaganda had done its work" ; and it was "just that part of the Second Army which had been most infected that gave way ; thus obliging the undefeated Third and Fourth Armies to fall back," and so to pave the way for the appalling defeat and disaster of Caporetto, with the capture of 300,000 Italian prisoners and 2,700 guns.

\* Sir Rennel Rodd : *Memories*.

## CHAPTER V

### THE KING AND THOSE THAT WERE WITH HIM

THEN it was that the King, who had played so splendid a part throughout, rallied his subjects in a famous speech :

“ As neither my house nor my people united in a single spirit have ever wavered in the face of danger, so even now we look adversity in the face without flinching. . . . Citizens and soldiers, be a single army ! All cowardice is treachery, all discord is treachery, all recrimination is treachery.”

Nor was this the only illustration of the noble spirit and example of Italy's King in this crisis of his country : from the very beginning of the war he had paid constant visits to the trenches at the hottest points ; and the Caporetto disaster seemed only to stimulate his courage and to whet his appetite for serving and saving his people.

D'ANNUNZIO.—D'Annunzio, too, was at hand to support his sovereign with an example equally noble : fighting in the Army first, although a long way past the fighting age ; and afterwards, with the Navy, plunging into some of the most dangerous and desperate expeditions on destroyers and submarines ; and “ covering himself with glory ” at length as a Flying Corps officer.

And this splendid spirit was now to be reflected in a spirit equally splendid on the part of the nation itself, which was prepared at length to make any sacrifice

in order that the men at the front should want for nothing, and that the Army might retrieve this appalling defeat and disaster, if indeed such a miracle were possible. It was reflected more particularly when the tables were turned, twelve months later, in the glorious victory of the Italian Army at Vittorio Veneto, when General Diaz in his communiqué was able to state that "what had been one of the most powerful armies in the world was annihilated"; while ultimately it was to be reflected in that famous Fascista Movement that was destined to awaken the entire nation from its sleep, and to usher in a new era, with a new régime, and a personnel of an entirely new type; with a method of government vigorous and startling, and at first sight unconstitutional; and, above all, with Mussolini, the man of the moment, at the helm to guide and control it.

But all this Italy had yet to earn for herself, passing through the hour of her agony in the process—an hour when "the steel of the nation was to be tempered in the burning fiery furnace of dire necessity." And as if to deepen the gloom, which had nothing apparently to relieve it, "thongs of refugees flying panic-stricken before the invaders, who murdered, raped, and burnt their way onward," were pouring into the country, until the City of Venice found itself only thirty kilometres from the front lines.

And now at length Italy was to see how the entire nation, instead of succumbing to this terrific blow, seemed to appreciate its significance, to awake as out of a dream, and to come to itself.

What had to be done, unless indeed Italy herself was to be undone, was to hold the new lines on the Asiago plateau and the Piave at any cost.



A WONDROUS ACHIEVEMENT.—The Army, or what was left of the Army, must be re-formed, while the nation was rallying itself with a watchword everywhere passed round—*Di qui non passerando*; and General Cadorna was there to see that it stood by it.

But we cannot see a picture with our face pressed against the canvas; and even now, when viewing it at arm's length, it is not everyone who appreciates the magnitude of Italy's achievement—the marvel of her recovery at home or the extent and vigour of the support she was giving to the Allies on the Western Front.

Even now, for example, it is not always realised how for the space of twelve days—the twelve eventful days from November 10 to November 22, 1917—the Italian Army by itself held up its formidable enemy before the Allies came actually into the firing-line to give it the support which they afterwards did.

Meantime Marshal Foch, when he had visited the supreme command to offer his counsel to Cadorna, found that the latter had put into operation already practically all the measures he had to suggest; while General Plumer, whose advice was much valued, had concurred with General Cadorna and General Diaz in their decision to fix the Army where it was, instead of withdrawing further to "a still shorter defensive line."

But the point to press is that, while the knowledge that the six British and five French divisions were on their way afforded great encouragement, of course, to the Italian Army, they were not actually by that Army's side until that Army had brought the enemy to a stand and definitely held him; and, as Luigi Villari tells us, "the successful defence of these positions—prepared by Cadorna—between November 10 and November 22

ranks as one of the finest achievements of the whole war"—a statement of the case that has recently received confirmation from one who was acting as British Ambassador at Rome at the time. "I have since more than once heard it suggested," he writes, "that the Italian Army was saved by the arrival of Allied divisions. This is, of course, a misapprehension. . . . These divisions eventually took part in repelling the intermittent attacks which continued till Christmas. But the British troops did not take up the position assigned to them on the Montello until the 4th of December, while the French arrived only a few days earlier."

The same writer enlarges also upon the difficulties the Italian Army had to surmount in the course of its retreat, and upon the achievement of the stand it succeeded ultimately in making. After alluding to the Second Army, how it came to be demoralised and to melt away, he goes on to say how "the remaining armies, the First, the Third, the Fourth, and the Fifth, behaved without reproach. . . . The Cavalry, among which the Dragoons of Genoa and the Lancers of Novara especially distinguished themselves, again and again flung desperate charges on the pursuing enemy to secure a brief respite for the retreating infantry. . . . It seemed at one moment doubtful whether the Third Army in the southern section, loaded with transport, or the advancing enemy would win the race. . . ." But in the event "the retreating forces were enabled to take up a strong position behind the shorter line of the Piave, where, extending themselves on the new ground, the Italian armies turned at bay and arrested the enemy advance. Had they not stood their ground, the Austrian and German divisions might have swept on into the plain of

Lombardy, with disastrous consequences to all the Allied fronts. But they held firm, and, reinforced by the very young levies that had just joined the colours, they emerged with honour from an ordeal which demanded the endurance of veterans. Historically the disastrous defection at Caporetto must never be separated from the gallant recovery on the Piave, which was one of the most important achievements of the Great War."

Nor again does everyone realise what Italy was doing on another front; her excellent work behind the French lines with the 70,000 men of her Labour Corps; and on the occasion of the last famous offensive launched by the Germans, when the latter broke through the lines in the eventful spring of 1918; or, once more, the distinguished services rendered at the battle of Bligny by the Italian Army Corps under General Albricci, and how Reims was saved in the following July.

The soldiers on the spot knew the facts, of course, in either case; but, as the world outside seemed not to realise them, it left a considerable soreness on the Italian mind, and for some time even affected Italy's relations and negotiations with her Allies.

Meantime, with few exceptions in the shape of anti-patriots, and men still plotting merely for political power, the country, now alive to the actual conditions, faced the difficulties, some of them common to all countries, some peculiar to herself, with conspicuous courage.

Thanks to the strenuous efforts of General Diaz, with the assistance of Generals Badoglio and Giardino, the Army had been reorganised, as it were, in a flash of time; and, well informed on this occasion of another attack soon to be launched against it, was prepared to

meet the blow, and in the event, on June 15, 1918, to beat back the enemy at every point.

Only five eventful months now remained before the winding-up of the great drama; and once again Italy found herself with a great decision to face: merely to pin down fifty Austro-Hungarian divisions on her front, and so to prevent them from sending reinforcements to the Army in France, would afford a contribution of great value; but there were other aspirations of her own to which she was committed—the question of her position and prestige, and the necessity of holding her own at the Peace Conference, now almost in sight; and in the event, on the advice of the Government, and particularly of Baron Sonnino, to whom Italy already owed so much, she determined to launch an offensive at the earliest possible moment.

The Italian Generals, in the meantime, having made their plans with the greatest care, the inter-Allied character of the operations was reflected in the names of the several officers selected to command, one of the attacking armies being under General the Earl of Cavan, another under the French General Graziani, while the other armies were under Italian Generals.

“The whole Army consisted of fifty-one Italian, three British, two French, and Czecho-slovak divisions, and one United States regiment, against seventy-three Austro-Hungarian divisions.”

And in the great victory that ensued the Italians soon found themselves on the Brenner Pass, and soon came to occupy the Gorizia district, Istria, and North Dalmatia, “thus reaching the frontiers assigned to Italy by the Treaty of London.”

Nor in our review of this memorable achievement

must we forget the significance of this double victory for Italy—a victory over the two enemies she had had to face throughout—the pacifist and defeatist propaganda within her own borders, and her formidable hereditary enemy without; a condition that will explain how it came to pass that the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Diaz, and the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Thaon di Revel, came to be included in Mussolini's first Cabinet; why the latter so often alludes to Vittorio Veneto as the commencement of the Fascista campaign; and how “the memory of this victory was to prove the antidote to the poison gas of Bolshevism and anti-patriotism which successive Governments since the Armistice had allowed to develop.”

## PART III

# ITALY AFTER THE WAR

### CHAPTER VI

#### THE RUSSIAN MODEL

IN the reaction following upon the Armistice, in spite of the glory and glamour of the great victory, Italy fell once again into a mood of depression. Everything had been done by the revolutionaries for some time past to damp down the national sentiment, to paralyse the various industries, to make it a disgrace for a man to be a patriot, and so to prepare the way for the reign of Socialism and for the proletarian State; and the war, while it had served to distract attention from these questions, had intensified those economic difficulties of the country that had been so long awaiting settlement. On the other hand, highly incensed by the attitude of the Powers towards the Fiume problem, and her claims in the Adriatic, and by a general want of appreciation outside the country of all she had done in the war, Italy felt some humiliation and resentment at a treatment she knew she did not deserve.

**SOLDIERS SNEERED AT.**—Nor when she looked at home was there anything to relieve the gloom: every aspect of the picture presented some urgent problem; the Budget, perhaps, being the most serious practical problem of all. And the country's difficulties in this respect were not rendered easier by the extravagance

and vulgar display of those who had been making money by the war at home, while others were dying for them at the front. But what was more exasperating still, especially to those who loved their country, was the shocking treatment meted out to the soldiers who survived; and this not only by the Reds and other revolutionaries, but by the Government itself. These men returned home only to find themselves sneered at as they passed, sometimes attacked brutally, while in a few instances they were actually murdered in the streets—a condition of things which the Government met by ordering them to go about unarmed and in mufti; and in some instances by delaying the day of their decoration!

But during all the trouble of this time, and presenting a dark background to the picture, was the phenomenon of the Russian Revolution, the crisis of which had come some eighteen months earlier, while the event was to prove itself pregnant with the future—a future that is coming only to declare itself gradually in all the countries of the world to-day.

Not all the Socialists, of course, were looking that way; some, indeed, were alarmed at the turn things were taking, and, as they have had to do since in other countries, were holding themselves apart; but the revolutionary extremists were wholly with Russia, were looking to Russia for a model to go by, and beginning to talk confidently of their coming triumph; and, with the Government unfortunately to encourage them, were providing a rallying centre for the turbulent spirits of the time.

**A CAMPAIGN OF STRIKES.**—Only a month after the Armistice, after declaring their allegiance to the Third (Moscow) International, the party had sketched out a

plan of campaign at Bologna; strikes and riots were breaking out in all directions—in Florence, Turin, Alessandria, Milan, Genoa, and other centres; and a programme was put out by which capital was to be abolished, and such “instruments of ‘bourgeois exploitation’ as the State, the municipalities, and all other public bodies” were to give place to soviets of soldiers and workmen, soviets of popular economy, all on the Russian model; while the war was denounced, in so many words, as a “capitalist crime.” To men in such a mood as this it was idle to speak of their duty to their Fatherland when they had been taught to answer, “We have no Fatherland but Russia, no Capital but Moscow”; and what with bad finance, scarcity of food, and a general shyness of work; what with profiteering and even blackmailing of the most shameless kind, the country was now going from bad to worse.

*PARTITO POPOLARE*.—At this juncture, and side by side with the Socialists, another group shot up suddenly, disputing much of the ground with the rest—a Catholic group, under the leadership of the brilliant Sicilian priest, Dom Luigi Sturzo, whose aim was to collect a body of men, with religion for their common bond, purer than the other parties, in order, if possible, to mend the mischief of the moment; but who came eventually, as De Lammenais had come eighty years before, under the displeasure of the Pope.

Meantime this party was welcomed by many at the moment owing to its soundness on the central Catholic positions: for, as we shall see later on, the Catholic Church is “the one consistent opponent of Socialism as she is the one consistent opponent of divorce”: she



sees, of course, the grave abuses of wealth and the grave abuses which so often mar the marriage state; but the abuse does not take away the use, and as she holds firmly to the indissolubility of the marriage bond, in spite of the glaring mischief that so often goes with it, so is it with the reality of private ownership and with a certain subordination in society which endures in spite of revolutions, and which as belonging to the nature of things, and being therefore according to the mind of God, she declines to ignore.

With the land question for its principal plank, this party recommended the breaking-up of the larger estates and dividing them among the cultivators, not, however, without compensation to the landlords; it was equally insistent upon the teaching of religion in the schools; it followed the Catholic line in its firmness on the subject of divorce and in its opposition to the State ownership of the Socialist;\* it was clear, too, on the policy so characteristic of Fascismo to-day of co-operation rather than class warfare as a principal secret of national well-being; and it was sound also, in the domain of foreign affairs, "in advocating a firm and patriotic policy." But with its net spread so wide as to include almost all sorts and conditions of men, it failed to hold them together; and more particularly it came to be betrayed in the end by its left wing of extremists, drifting so far in the direction of the very Reds themselves as to bring their leader under the censure of the Pope, and eventually to wreck the party.

A circular issued by the State Secretariat of the Holy See, forbidding all priests with a cure of souls to take

\* See *An Examination of Socialism*, and *The Catholic Church and Socialism*, by Hilaire Belloc (Catholic Truth Society, London).

part in politics, was followed up a few months later by a new circular of a more stringent character to the bishops, laying it down that "His Holiness wishes that all those who in some way represent and measure the interests of religion should keep to the rules of the strictest prudence, avoiding even the appearance of an attitude in favour of political parties."

Among the other groups some were for peaceful penetration, like the Fabians—a sort of mesmerising of the multitude while they let them down gradually into nationalisation; others, such as the old Liberal parties, were divided and without any programme at all; while others, again, in view of the elections which were due the next month, were for abstaining from the polls and for an immediate revolution. Meantime the general multitude of people in Italy, sick of all parties and without any faith in the Government, were simply exasperated by the conditions under which they had to exist.

A CLOUD IN THE SOCIALIST SKY.—This, with an international situation outside which was no nearer a solution, may be said to represent, in outline, the general condition at the time of the election, November 16, 1919, a year after the Armistice.

In the event the result appeared as follows: The strength of the official Socialists increased from about 50 to 156—a significant advance which seemed to say that their sky was all serene; the *Partito Popolare* were 101; the Republican numbers fell to 8 or 9; 30 members represented the ex-combatants; and the rest were from the old Democratic and Liberal groups.

And where was Mussolini all this time? On the move throughout, we may be sure. Several candidates

of his own colour indeed presented themselves for election for the first time, and in doing so seemed only to invite disaster; not one of the Fascisti, not even Mussolini himself, being returned.

Here, then, was a triumph for the enemy; the Socialist group with a majority far in advance of all the rest and the Fascista party nowhere! And yet was that quite so? The *Avanti*, at all events, thought so, and had its own pleasant way of recording it. "A corpse in an advanced state of putrefaction," it wrote, "was dragged out of the Naviglio yesterday. It was identified as that of Benito Mussolini." Another day was to show what would become of that corpse! Meantime, would it not have been truer to say that a cloud had appeared on the Socialist horizon, not bigger than a man's hand, perhaps; but there nevertheless for those who had eyes to see; there for those—only a few—who could measure its significance.

Meantime, as if determined to show at once what they thought of themselves on the occasion of the opening of the new Parliament, the Socialist deputies, after appearing on the scene with red carnations in their buttonholes, thought well to walk out of the Chamber as the King walked in—a piece of provocation on their part which they might have known would not be allowed to pass unchallenged, for His Majesty had received an ovation from the majority within the House, and there were plenty of people prepared to avenge such an insult outside.

## CHAPTER VII

### A TIME OF TYRANNY

"**BE** bold, be bold, be not too bold," is an old saying the extremists would have done well to remember, and one which Mussolini himself never forgets.

As it was, this outrage only provoked another attack, some of their own body being injured on coming out of the Chamber. And this attack, in its turn, provoked a protest strike, which proved the signal for riots of a serious nature; and the country was obliged to see now that a crisis must soon come.

Meantime officers were attacked in the streets and had to use their revolvers; while at Mantua a mob of Anarchists, after actually taking possession of the town for some hours, burnt the prison, let loose some two hundred criminals, and went on to pillage the shops and to murder the people.

So assured, indeed, were the Socialists of their security and of their coming triumph that they called upon their countrymen to surrender.

1920.—The year 1920 especially was to witness a reign of tyranny on their part; and with Italy well under their heel for a whole twelve months, that party snapped its fingers at a Government that had given way to it at almost every turn, insulted and shouted down anyone who presumed to oppose it, and, turning the Chamber into a bear garden, spread trouble, and in the end even terror, on every side.

The only spot, indeed, at this juncture where it was possible for a man to be proud of the tricolour, proud

of being a patriot, was the town of Fiume, of which D'Annunzio had taken possession suddenly by force, and to which his action, whatever else may be said of it, had certainly secured its Italian character.

But in spite of this accession of power the election had brought with it, and in spite of the encouragement it gave to the Reds, something on a wider scale was needed if Government conditions as they saw them were to be clean put out and a Socialist State put in their place.

**MONSTER STRIKES AGAIN.**—Meantime the Reds broke loose on society, inciting the mob to plunder and murder, the employees even in a millinery business, for example, being taught that it was their duty to thief and to cheat; while the prescription for this further step was to be the promotion of monster strikes, chiefly in the public services and on a scale so vast as to disorganise the economic life of the country and so, by starving the masses, to goad them into revolution—a condition in which we may recognise one principal clue to the Fascista Movement. For what we now see before us is not merely industrial strikes on the part of those who were looking, perhaps justly, for redress, but political strikes of all kinds following one upon another in quick succession, and intended to stab the Constitution in its very heart and to overturn the State—monster strikes multiplying and gathering force as they go—this on the one hand; while side by side with all this the phenomenon of a Government that does not know what to do with them—a Government that is sometimes conniving secretly, sometimes openly encouraging, and only in rare instances showing a firm hand. It is these two factors side by side, acting and reacting upon one another over a long course of years, but more seriously

than ever in these later years—this double cumulative energy now at length grown into a tradition that was hurrying the country headlong into ruin—this it was that was now soon to come to its climax, and that constituted the *raison d'être* of Mussolini's famous effort. Every man will use force to save his life, and Italy at length was obliged to use force, and the force she used was Fascismo.

The fever was now at its height; strikes, riots, outrages followed in quick succession all through the winter and spring of 1920 and afterwards: the railwaymen who had been underpaid before the war had their wages increased now more than the cost of living could justify; and this, while it caused jealousy with other industries less fortunate than themselves, made the strike leaders popular, of course; it made the deputies in Parliament popular; and as the Prime Minister seemed to lean to their side it made him popular also—for the moment.

Meantime the Union secretaries, who were receiving full wages, being exempt from ordinary duty, were allowed free passes on the railway, which enabled them to carry on their revolutionary propaganda in all directions.

A postal and telegraph strike was proclaimed because the Government did not at once make concessions; and in some parts where the revolutionary spirit was especially rife, women were frightened into striking; and, as the strikers were pretty sure of impunity, those who refused to fall in with them knew what to expect afterwards—knew, in fact, that “their life would be made a hell for them.”

Here again the ringleaders, instead of being

punished, were left to return to work and brutally to insult those who had declined to leave it.

Again, although it would have required an extra expenditure of hundreds of millions to meet the demands now being made by the railwaymen, 66,000 of them struck because their demands were not satisfied at once. But the cloud was there in the sky, larger now than a man's hand and extending itself more and more; citizen committees began to form and volunteers to come forward from all classes, as they did recently in England; engineers, ex-naval men, and others ran trains for the Government, and even sent the hat round on the train for those who had stayed at their posts. And all this in spite of discouragement from the very prefects themselves. The railways, moreover, it must be remembered, belonged to the State; and the motive for this strike, therefore, could not have been other than political and revolutionary.

And yet, even with voluntary support to encourage it, the Government leant its weight on the side of the strikers, whose committee, after mistaking the event for a triumph, published a proclamation to the men, declaring that "it was the first time the State, the defender of Capital, had bowed its head . . ."; while the Socialist organ *Avanti* boasted that "the men had returned to work with red flags flying."

It was the same with another type of strike, the agricultural. When the landowners applied to the prefects for protection to enable them to get in their harvest, all they were told was to hold themselves responsible for any disorders that might arise.

**BOLSHEVIK INVADERS.**—And so in the days that followed, in February, in March, in April, in June,

there were strikes all the time: in one city all the metal workers struck owing to some petty dispute over a clock that was supposed to have been tampered with in the motor works; trains conveying munitions to Poland, just then "in the death grip of the Bolshevik invaders," were held up lest the "freedom" of Russia should be interfered with; and trains conveying soldiers to centres of disorder were stopped in the same way.

In one case where murderers were on their trial the chief of police disclosed the fact afterwards that the Carabinieri and police agents had to be disguised as beggars in order to travel by rail.

A more daring type of strike, one full of significance and paving the way for what was to prove the most daring strike of all, calculated also to convince the strike leaders that there was nothing now to check them, occurred at Mazzoni's Cotton Mills in Piedmont, where, after a long and fruitless struggle over the question of wages, the owners decided to close down the works—a step that was met by the workers suddenly seizing the mills and starting to work them for themselves. Here, again, when the owners applied for protection, the Government replied by "legitimising the action of the workmen."

Among the many lesser strikes that ensued was that of the tramwaymen, who came out in "sympathy" with the strikers on the secondary railways. But the public were to the front again at once; and when the men returned to work with the red flag flying, they tore it down and gave them a sound thrashing.

**THE MOST SERIOUS STRIKE OF ALL.**—But the most serious strike of all was now to come, and, as it proved, to hasten on the climax—a strike which Villari after-



wards described as "the high-water mark of Bolshevik madness."

In Northern Italy, under the exceptional conditions of the war, the metal workers' industry had been run with marked skill and success, yielding large fortunes to some of the owners and a high rate of wages to the staff—a condition which was bound to give way to reaction after the Armistice and to a sudden drop in demand. But in spite of this the workmen persisted in requiring a higher rate of wages, and when it was not granted decided at once to strike. Whereupon the revolutionaries, recognising in this another opportunity, encouraged the workers to press their demands, and so, by bringing things once more to a deadlock, to achieve at length the aim of their lives—the establishment of a Soviet Republic.

After conferences had come to nought and the works had been closed down the workers took this for a signal to seize the factories, to obstruct the work, to damage the plant, and to hold up the industry—a course which was accompanied in some parts of the country by the singing of songs, the waving of the red flag, and threats of murder.

This strike soon extended itself to the chemical works and to the textile and other factories; and things went from bad to worse under the pressure of what has now come to be known as "direct action"; until, on finding after all that they could not dispense with experts and owners, after kidnapping some of them and holding them prisoners on their own premises, they tried in vain to force them to work their own machinery, and to do this in the interests of their own men.

Revolutionary tribunals were set up, and Red Guards,

comprising the dregs of the criminal classes, were on the watch ready to fire upon anyone who dared to enter the works, or even to pass by them; until at length, being unable to obtain credit for raw material to carry on the work, in many cases they relapsed into conditions of drunkenness and debauchery.

The crisis had come at length, and with some 400,000 men involved in this latest and most alarming phase of the long-drawn-out struggle, the issue seemed to hang in the balance; the question being whether the extremists should achieve entire control of this vast body of strikers, and, by plunging Italy into a revolution, establish the condition long sought for—a Soviet régime; or whether the control would go elsewhere.

**A SIGNIFICANT VOTE.**—There was only one other body to contest this leadership with them—a body largely in sympathy with themselves, but with this important distinction, that whereas the extremists were looking rather to the political, the Confederation of Labour was looking to the economic side of the question, and—an important distinction—was not in favour of a revolution.

It was a momentous question, which of the two was to have the control; and in the event, at a meeting of the Confederation, the issue was decided by vote, the resolution in favour of the Confederation being carried by a majority of 181,676—a significant check to the extremists, which, if it did not bring the strike actually to an end, was destined eventually to decide the issue.

Certainly the struggle was not over, and deeds of violence and even horrible murders were yet to come. A shocking crime, for example, was committed on September 22 of the year 1920, when a Nationalist

student and the prison guard, while passing by chance near one of the occupied factories, were seized, "brought before a mock tribunal of apaches and prostitutes, and brutally murdered."

But terrible though all these tragedies were, they might be described as the deeds of desperate men, who knew that their day was nearly done. Meantime the trouble was more serious, of course, in some districts than in others: in Romagna, for example, for months past things had been desperate. The medium of agitation, too, might vary according to the conditions of the district, the land affording an opportunity in the country and the factory in the town; but, however the medium might vary, the motive was everywhere the same—namely, to see to it that things as they were should not succeed, to protest that the system of Capitalism, as they would call it, had broken down, and to quote this failure—a failure of their own making—as an argument for substituting the Soviet system of government in its place.

How the factories had come to be manipulated for this purpose we have seen already, and their attitude towards the land was even worse; here the "landlord" and all that the term signified was the grievance, and by hook or by crook he must be got rid of.

As matters stood in Romagna, for instance, "the peasants were better off than in any other part of Italy," but then the old grievance was there also, for many of them owned the land they were working on, and men who have a stake in their own country do not wish to see it come to the ground—it is when they do not own that they are tempted not to mind; and it was necessary, if possible, to reduce these landowning

peasants to the condition of ordinary farm labourers before they could be sufficiently pliable for the purpose. So the agitation proceeded with the usual result—a strike; and so long as the strike lasted the land stayed as it was; the late summer found the grass rotting on the ground, and when the autumn came “the wheat harvest was lying in the open unthreshed.” Meantime all that the men could do was to look on at this, or else to look out for themselves; for the tyranny here was in full play, and anyone who protested against these conditions was soon brought to his bearings, and his life “made a veritable hell to him.” Parents who would not bow their necks to this intolerable yoke were refused milk; their children could not be conveyed to the hospital, the dead could not be buried. “Individual murders were by no means infrequent, some of them perpetrated in circumstances of fiendish cruelty.” And once again the Government was leaning its weight on the wrong side—on the side, that is, of the unions, instead of protecting those who were being terrorised, and robbed of their liberty to work.

No doubt Mussolini’s face at this moment was a picture—a moving picture; and men could almost hear the words he was muttering, “Never again.” “Never again,” indeed, may well have been the refrain of the movement henceforth—a refrain that was soon to rise to something more than a mutter and to be shouted aloud upon the house-top. There were men in training now who would see to this, and in the course of two or three years would pay dearly with their lives for it—some two thousand made the great sacrifice—rather than let Italy go back again to those days of darkness and despair.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TURN OF THE TIDE

SYMPTOMS of recovery were beginning now to show everywhere : apart from the right and the wrong of things the multitude of people had come to see that a condition of perpetual unrest must prove fatal to Italy's future and to themselves; the truth about Russia, too, was beginning to come through and to open the eyes of everyone; the middle classes were pulling themselves together; Mussolini's organ *Il Popolo d'Italia* and the review *Ardita*, the advanced guard of the Fascista now to be added to it, were sounding out a note of warning for all Italy to hear; and Mussolini's band, increasing rapidly in numbers, was soon to give the country a taste of what all its training was to come to; while it afforded a rallying centre for all who were in sympathy with itself.

Revolutionary outbreaks would continue for a time, of course, but there was something else there now, ever waiting upon them, ever watching them, and ready at the right moment to spring.

The municipal elections, too, which in Italy have a bearing on the general political situation, were another sign of the times which the country could not ignore; and in several important centres Socialists had been supplanted by members of the Constitutional party.

Meantime the men of the new movement had not long to wait; and, as in the early days of the war the crime of the sinking of the *Lusitania* proved the last

straw with many, making America begin to think she might have to strike in, and making Italy certain that she must do so, so now a great crime was to provide another crisis, of which Bologna was to be the scene and centre, where revolutionaries would find themselves face to face with the Fascisti, and "the whole Red organisation would come crashing to the ground."

**A BOLD STAND AT BOLOGNA.**—September 20, being the anniversary of the occupation of Rome and a day that every patriot was proud of, was also and for that very reason an event the Bologna Socialists would be determined to challenge; and when, in spite of Bolshevik threats, the patriots formed up in procession and laid a wreath on the monument of Victor Emmanuel, the Reds fired upon them from a restaurant just as the procession was about to break up. Some of the patriots retaliated at once by firing back, and then proceeded further to wreck a newspaper kiosk, where revolutionary literature was on sale.

It is a day not to be forgotten in the history of the movement, as marking the first attempt at reaction in the most dangerous district in the country; and it required a bold man at that moment to face round on Bologna. But what had been so far was but a hint of much more serious things that were soon to be.

Three weeks later, on the occasion of a Socialist demonstration organised by the Anarchist Malatesta, occurred the murder of a Royal Guard and a police inspector—a crime which not only infuriated the Fascisti and the Nationalists, but also provoked a patriotic procession in the way of protest; the tricolour was seen to shoot up suddenly in all directions, and the Trade Union Council, taking the hint, put a stop to the

strike. Moreover, in spite of the Prefect, who, in his dread of a demonstration, had prescribed a private funeral, the chief of police, with the multitude of citizens to support him, demanded a public funeral, when nearly 100,000 people followed the cortège; while a public subscription of 140,000 lire was raised in a week for the survivors. But the climax was yet to come: the Government, encouraged by this reaction, proceeded to arrest several Anarchists; and the notorious Bucco, Secretary of the Bologna Camera del Lavoro, began to take the Fascista band seriously and to turn pale, until eventually, dressed up in the uniform of one of the Royal Guards, he had to be hurried away out of Bologna, but not without leaving behind him the record of a deficit in the account of the Camera del Lavoro amounting to no less than 200,000 lire.

For some time he had had things his own way—a terrible way indeed, which included free indulgence for every crime, and a condition of things in which any officer who appeared in uniform was “liable to be assaulted and murdered in the public street with absolute impunity for the assassins.”

And now was to come the first meeting of the new Council in this district, and with it the hatching of a desperate plot on the part of the revolutionaries—viz., to take possession of the town, and to proceed to assassinate the bourgeoisie, the Fascisti, and all other opponents. Supplies of arms were smuggled into the town hall under the guise of refreshments, and “the municipal guards, the firemen, and the octroi guards who had been organised as armed communist corps, and *leghisti* from the country districts were to make a great display and terrorise the population.”

But things were not now as they had been, and the Fascisti getting to know of this, the Prefect thought it wiser to intervene and to propose a moderate programme for the ceremony of the 21st—the Socialists were not to expose any red flag on the Garisenda and Asinelli towers (the leaning towers of Bologna) nor on the balcony of the town hall “save that the mayor-elect might appear on it surrounded by the red flags of the associations, which were to be withdrawn immediately; the minority councillors (Constitutionalists) to be respected.”

**DARKNESS BEFORE THE DAWN.**—The Fascisti on their part were not to appear either at the ceremony within the building or in the streets outside. The promise, however, was broken, the mayor appeared amid the cheers of his followers, up went the flag on the Asinelli tower, and the anger of the Fascisti being now in full flood, they began to make furious attempts to break through the cordon of soldiers and police into the hall, while the Socialists on their part fired on them and threw bombs into the crowd, with the result that no fewer than ten people were killed and sixty-six wounded.

And within the building things were no better; savage insults were hurled at the minority Constitutionalists, and, worse than all, and quite suddenly, nineteen shots were fired from the Socialist benches, and one “Giulio Giordani, a disabled ex-officer, fell mortally wounded.”

I have said that the soul of Mussolini loathes perfidy, and the members of his body, mad with passion at this dastardly exhibition of it, ran amok among their enemies and rent them, attacking and wrecking many of their institutions, burning down the Camera del Lavoro and the chambers of the Communist deputy Donati.



A Commission which was appointed to inquire into the matter issued a scathing report of the administration, including a terrible indictment of the deeds that had been done that day; and in view of the tension of the moment it was thought wiser to appoint no Council for the present, and to defer the election in this district to the end of 1922.

Meantime the Band went forward, conquering and to conquer; and in spite of the Reds, who fought as only desperate men will fight, the enemy began to go down like ninepins before an advance which they could no longer withstand.

**CLEANING UP THE COMMUNES.**—Meaning business now and with bludgeons or revolvers in their hands, the Fascisti pushed their way through town after town, cleaning up the mischief as they went.

Where it was a murderer they were in search of, they would kill him if he resisted, otherwise they would hand him over to the police. On the other hand, if they could not discover the actual culprit, they would make an example of the leading Communists by thrashing them soundly before they passed on.

Sometimes they would burn down Red institutions, or throw their records into the streets and set them on fire; sometimes, adopting a more quaint form of punishment, they would force doses of castor oil down the throats of their victims, exposing them to the ridicule of their friends.

Whole administrations were forced to resign, except where they anticipated the enemy's approach and resigned in advance, although a few districts, of course, were defiant and desperate, and some of the Fascisti were murdered at Ferrara, but only again to provoke

a reaction in favour of the Band. Some of the Labour Unions, at this juncture, came over in a body to Fascismo, "burning their red flags and the portraits of Marx and Lenin, and adopting the tricolour as their emblem"; until Italy at length began to look up to this body of bold and daring men as the liberators of their country, which they certainly were. On the other hand, a split began to show itself in the enemy's ranks: the "Reformist" Socialists, indeed, had broken off from the party before the war, and were soon to melt away into the ranks of the Fascisti; but now some even of the "Official" Socialists were withdrawing from the ranks of the left wing extremists, a section who were bent on forcing the party's hand. The latter took their hats off to Russia, claimed Moscow for their capital, were champions of the Third (Moscow) International, and talked loudly of "the dictatorship of the proletariat." Some, again, while aiming perhaps at the same revolutionary ends, were in favour of slower and more soothing means, like the Fabians.

Meantime, on looking round the world, Moscow saw, as the French revolutionists had seen 120 years before, that the success of the Bolsheviks at home depended upon the propagation of their gospel in foreign parts, and could say with their forerunners, "All peoples are our friends, all Governments are our enemies"; men could be sent out on these foreign missions, money could "speak," perhaps, as well as men, schools might be established for the education of the young, "cells of enterprise" might be formed in the several industries, and a system of nuclei designed "to take possession of Trade Union authority."

A mission of this kind to Hungary had not met with

success, but the experiment might now be tried in Italy, where they fancied a revolution was already in sight; and after that it might be extended to Germany, France, and England.

NO SMALL STIR AT LEGHORN.—Now when the Italian Socialists were called together at Leghorn for to consider of this matter, there was “no small stir about that way”; and “some cried one thing, some another, for the assembly was confused.” Indeed, “the extremists shrieked like maniacs,” revolvers were flourished but not fired; and the moderates were called upon to listen to the language of Moscow: “With Russian Communism it is all or nothing; you take it or you leave it; we will see at least that you do not ‘moderate’ it.” Such in substance was the message which made it easy for Italy soon to make up her mind; and when Italian Socialists were told that the Communists were “the guardians of the true faith,” and that it was for Moscow to take over the management, they knew where they were; 98,028 votes being registered for the Florence resolution—a resolution frankly hostile to Moscow; 40,000 less votes being given for the Communist resolution; while 14,695 were given to the “Right Wing.”

The meaning of this was that the Socialists were not going to be “browbeaten by a foreign Government,” a conclusion to which every nation that has not lost its self-respect and every Trade Union that has not forgotten itself must sooner or later come.

In the example before us the resolution meant also that Socialism in Italy was now to become a kingdom divided against itself; so much so that, after withdrawing into another building to hold a congress of their own, the

Communists proceeded to excommunicate their moderate brethren, as Moscow had commanded.

Meantime the disorder had been extreme, and the temptation to be satirical proving too much for some of the Fascisti, one of their number sent a telegram to the Chairman offering the services of four members of the Band—a number presumably adequate to control the several hundreds of delegates in the Assembly.

Now that the Communists and Socialists, no longer able to combine, were confronting one another, the former took over by themselves the task of turning the Constitution upside down; and as strikes of every kind over a long course of years had failed in their purpose, they tried a new weapon in the shape of murders and outrages of all kinds in order if possible to terrorise the people into a revolution; the ground being cleared and the centre of the arena being left practically for the Fascisti and the Reds to fight it out.

**BLACKSHIRTS VERSUS REDS.**—In one instance school-boys on their way to a patriotic demonstration were surprised by a bomb thrown into their midst by some Communists concealed in a side-street, several people being killed or wounded.

Instantly the Fascisti were to the fore, proceeding to punish the enemy by wrecking various offices of the Reds, and killing a notorious agitator, after warning him of his fate beforehand.

This led in its turn to affrays between the two deadly foes, and several murders of a particularly brutal character were committed by the Communists, including the murder of a little boy, whom they took as he was riding his bicycle over the bridge and threw into the Arno. Members of the Band, meantime, continued

everywhere to be busy, punishing offenders whenever they could find them; while the troops and police, who were doing their work loyally now, had the Fascisti ever by their side to support them.

In another outbreak one hundred were wounded and twenty killed; and some unarmed seamen on their way to replace strikers were seized by a band of armed Communists and some of them murdered "in circumstances of most atrocious cruelty"; whereupon the local Fascisti, who were soon on the spot, retaliated by murdering some of the Communists and burning their houses. Bomb outrages continued to be committed in trains and restaurants; and these illustrations of a dreary, long-dragged-out tale of tragedy may be concluded with the mention of a dastardly crime in the Diana Theatre, where an infernal machine, which had been thrown into the midst of the audience, killed twenty persons and wounded two hundred, including women and children.

With such outrages as these carried on constantly before its eyes, and with such evident determination on the part of the famous Band to punish them and so to undertake for the Government what it seemed incapable of doing for itself, the country had come round now entirely to the side of the Fascisti, and was ready always to cheer them to the echo and to cover them with flowers on their return from their punitive expeditions.

Meantime the day had come for the Band to go forward and to claim for itself some constitutional means of influencing public opinion and proclaiming to the world its policy.

**A PARTY AND A PROGRAMME.**—November 6, 1921, immediately after the ceremony of Italy's tribute "to

the Unknown Soldier," the first ceremony of the kind Italy had been suffered to observe—an occasion on which the King and the Royal Family, the Government, the Army and the Navy, and, in fact, the entire nation had been represented amid scenes of extraordinary enthusiasm—such was the psychological moment chosen for a Fascista Congress in Rome, for the formation at that Congress of a political party, under the definite title of *Partito nazionale fascista*, and for an important speech by Mussolini. The main purpose of this speech was to show that Fascismo was determined to restore discipline in the matter of class struggles, to insist on the prohibition of strikes in the public services, and to hand over to private enterprise, as Belgium has recently handed over her railways, such industrial undertakings as the State had proved itself not competent to carry on.

Furthermore, with a significant gesture Mussolini was able to point to the Volunteer Militia as Fascismo's right arm, ever ready to be at the service of the State and to defend the supreme interests of the nation; like the building up again of the famous city in the Old Testament, when "half of the servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons."

Meantime not only were the Socialists divided, but the left wing of the *Partito* was showing a tendency to divide that group also by alienating the members of the right and by bringing its more revolutionary policy, and in particular its leader Dom Sturzo himself, under the displeasure of the Pope.

On the other hand, Mussolini, recognising that the Catholic religion is the religion of the bulk of the Italian people, has ever shown it the utmost respect; and while

he was as displeased as the Pope could be at the revolutionary turn the extremists in the party had taken, there was no intention on his part, evidently, of repeating the old and deadly mistake of attacking the Church herself, and once more setting Church and State by the ears—a blunder which would have been in glaring contradiction to that very spirit of co-operation which has been all along one of the main principles of his policy. As it was, while union after union was breaking away from Socialism and coming over to Fascismo, the more moderate men of all parties were now disposed to follow suit, and since the Government itself was breaking down, and with it a whole condition of things which was bound simply to go if the country itself was ever to be cured, it remained for Mussolini alone to grapple with the situation and to take over the management of it himself.

## CHAPTER IX

### FRIEND OR FOE

REALISING that Government cannot go on when Cabinet after Cabinet is going out, Mussolini determined to make for a General Election—a prospect, however, which under the confused conditions of the moment the Prime Minister flatly refused to face. Would he contemplate a dissolution, then; or, if not, would he be willing to resign, and so to make way for a new Cabinet in which the Fascista influence would predominate? The answer again was “No”—to both.

Mussolini then stood up to speak: some banners for several new contingents of the Band were to be consecrated at Udine; and he took the opportunity of proclaiming his policy.

After tracing in outline the history of the movement, he said a few significant words on the subject of foreign policy, and more significant words still on the glorious traditions of Italy's famous Army, and the existence to-day of another army—the Fascista army—that was standing by its side. They need have no misgivings as to the monarchy so long as it could be made into a real monarchy; and, claiming the sympathy of all the right-minded people of the moment, he called upon them to take their courage into their hands and to come out into the open—a line of argument which linked up together, at one and the same moment, many who had had misgivings as to his republican tendencies, and also the Army and Navy who owed their allegiance, of course, to the King.



A few days later, in the presence of thousands of Blackshirts at Cremona, he carried his argument further, and reminding them of the Piave where the Italian Army had made its famous stand, and to the glorious victory some months later at Vittorio Veneto, he declared that the Piave was intended not merely to put a stop to the enemy, but to afford a starting-point for themselves.

From the banks of the Piave they were now marching side by side with their banners, and nothing in the world could stop them until they had entered Rome itself; "there will be no obstacles, neither men nor things, able to hold us up."

FORCE AN EPISODE, NOT A SYSTEM.—The argument was carried further still on October 5 at Milan, where he spoke to them of some great thing that had to be done, and hinted that force might have to be used before they could do it. In praising the Fascisti of Milan for risking their lives in an assault they had made on the Communist headquarters at the *Avanti* offices, he said: "This is violence. This is the violence of which I approve, which I extol. This is the violence of the Milan Fascio. And Italian Fascismo should make it its own. Not the small individual acts of violence, but the great, fine, inexorable violence of decisive hours. . . ."

This language is significant: force has come in our minds to be associated so intimately with Fascismo that we are apt to jump to the conclusion that Fascismo means nothing else. On the contrary, Mussolini insists upon the utmost discrimination in the use of this dangerous weapon; as he insisted later on, in the instructions he gave to his Prefects: "Do not hesitate

to put people into prison. Rather twenty safely imprisoned than one killed out in the open. The twenty will be set free again two days later." And more precisely, at another time, in the shape of a principle: "Force should be an episode, not a system."

Meantime people were beginning to be anxious, and a strange silence was settling down on the land, like the unnatural silence so often preceding a storm: hints of a march on Rome had been dropped before, almost without being noticed, but now they were being dropped again in language that no one could mistake, and Italy held her breath. For this, indeed, his plans were ready, and he confided them to the General Secretary, Michele Bianchi, and to a few others; and then, with some 40,000 Fascisti, in military formation and under perfect discipline parading the streets of Naples, he captured the imagination of a dense crowd which included some 10,000 working men, and afterwards delivered his famous speech in the San Carlo Theatre. Two points had to be pressed at this juncture and made plain beyond dispute.

1. Fascismo was on the side of the Army and on the side of the King, not against them.
2. The management of the country must be handed over to the Fascisti, or they would have to take it for themselves.

He was not unmindful of the past, he said, nor of Italy's great men who had built up the Liberal State; nor was he there to sacrifice that State, but to save it. But this he could compass only if he had the reins in his own hands with the team that he had been training and which he knew so well how to handle.

In other words, the youth of Italy, with all the freshness and enthusiasm of youth, the young men of the war just back from the front, knowing what they had fought for there, and ready to go on fighting for it here—it was this young blood, this new generation of Italians that he wanted to introduce into this great business of Government. And then, in language recalling the manner and tone of his farewell speech to the Socialists eight years before :

“I tell you with all the solemnity which the moment demands—it is a question of days, perhaps of hours—either the Government will be given to us or we shall seize it by marching on Rome ”—a momentous challenge which evoked thunderous applause and loud shouts of “ To Rome ” from a crowd now almost frantic with excitement.

**THE FAMOUS FOUR.**—At ten o'clock that night, the night of October 24, 1922, four famous men were chosen to forward this great enterprise—Michele Bianchi, Dr. Italo Balbo, the commander of the Fascista forces, Signor de Vecchi, an ex-officer with a gold medal for valour, and General de Bono, a distinguished commander in the war, the organiser of the Fascista forces—these with Signor Grandi, another ex-officer, to see to the political functions of the enterprise.

Two of the chiefs were to tell the King how grave a situation had come up; and the Cabinet was induced eventually to resign.

Meanwhile the Fascista staff had made their headquarters at Perugia, and an order having been given for the mobilisation of the Fascista force, masses of Black-shirts were now scattered about the country in all the chief towns, some in particular being quartered around

and about Rome itself, ready at the given word to march on the capital.

And so we come at last to the celebrated March on Rome—a march that was to mean so much for Mussolini himself, so much for the monarch he was now at length to meet, and so much for the country's welfare in the future.

There was a famous day in Ireland in 1914, when two forces were face to face with the prospect of a civil war which seemed inevitable, and when a great European War intervened to prevent it; but there was no such war now to step in and to stop a deadly conflict between the forces of the Crown in Italy and 90,000 Fascisti, soon to face one another in the capital of their own country.

And as if to quench the last spark of hope, the Prime Minister proclaimed martial law, leaving no loophole apparently for escape from an overwhelming disaster—the disaster of two forces which were really friends being compelled by the law to face one another as enemies.

Meantime Mussolini had done his utmost to prevent any conflict with the Army by placing each column under a distinguished General belonging to the Fascista force; and, after concentrating at various centres, these columns converged upon Rome, and were received by the people everywhere with “frenzied enthusiasm.”

TO ROME.—A few incidents of a serious kind happened in a quarter known as a notorious hotbed of Anarchists, where the Fascisti were fired upon and some Communists were killed. Otherwise the most perfect discipline prevailed throughout. And yet unless something unforeseen was to happen, all this

precaution could not prevent the disaster that was impending. One loophole alone was left: under the stress of the moment the Prime Minister had issued the decree of martial law without the royal signature; and when he brought it to Rome for this last formality the King refused to sign it; it would mean nothing short of civil war and disaster for the country. "But it has already gone out and has been communicated to the Press," was the reply. "Then," answered the King, full of indignation at this want of respect to himself and his authority, "then it must be revoked at once." And revoked it was within a few hours after being issued. And so the country was saved.

Meantime Mussolini, who had been summoned by telegram to the King, reached Rome on the same morning, and paused to shake hands with the Colonel of the regiment on duty at the station: "My first greeting on treading the sacred soil of Rome is for the glorious Army of Vittorio Veneto"; and after begging him to transmit this message to the other officers and to the men, he hurried on to the Quirinal, and, apologising for his black shirt, presented himself to the King: "I bring to Your Majesty the Italy of Vittorio Veneto, reconsecrated by the new victory, and declare myself the devoted servant of Your Majesty." And after presenting the list he had drawn up for the new Cabinet to which the King gave his warm approval—"It is excellent and well composed"—Mussolini's next step was to arrange for the departure of the Fascista force.

**THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER.**—Before actually dispersing, however, two significant steps remained to be taken: the treatment of Italy's soldiers by the Reds and even by the Government itself had left behind it a feeling of

deep resentment; and although Britons had been allowed to do honour to their dead at the Cenotaph in London, and Frenchmen also at the Arc de l'Etoile in Paris; although, moreover, it was Italy herself who had originated the very idea of such a tribute—Italians were only now for the first time, three whole years from the date of the Armistice, allowed to come into line with them and do the same.

So it came to pass that the immense cortège was to be seen advancing to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier on the monument to Victor Emmanuel to pay its solemn tribute.

**A KING WORTHY TO BE HONOURED.**—And next there was the question of the monarchy; and the great procession made its way up the Via Nazionale and Via 24 Maggio to the Quirinal to pay homage to the King, as described by Luigi Villari: "The beautiful piazza was thronged with people, and every window and roof black with spectators. The King appeared at the balcony between General Diaz, now Minister of War, and his colleague, Admiral Thaon de Revel, Minister of Marine.

"Slowly the 100,000 Blackshirts, comprising the pick of Italy's youth, marched past the King, whom they saluted in ancient Roman style, the right arm outstretched, and cheered again and again. Never had there been such a magnificent demonstration of loyalty to the Crown as the homage paid to it by the army of 'Revolutionists.'" And now at length this memorable day, the hours of which had been so wondrously organised, was brought to a close with a review by Mussolini of the Fascista forces, who then returned quietly and in perfect order to their homes.

## CHAPTER X

### MUSSOLINI IN POWER

MUSSOLINI was now in power, and the double test that he had instituted for all Italians—"Country" and "Co-operation"—was reflected in the very first Cabinet he had to form: the Fascista element predominated, of course; and to show that he was making for constitutional conditions every principal group was represented in it, with two significant exceptions—viz., the anti-national Socialists and the Communists.

Actually and in Italy these extremists had come formally and expressly to disown the State; and now that it came to the test the State had to disown them.

Meantime Mussolini's position was peculiar—a small following within the Chamber, an overwhelming majority in the country outside; and yet he would not go to the country. He would have to go to it, of course, sooner or later, but he knew where he was and what he wanted; the March on Rome was his own matter, a great achievement, but scarcely to be defended on merely constitutional grounds. Meantime the Chamber itself wanted mending before Government of any kind could do much with it: the actual machinery of the executive had come to be encrusted with false traditions—traditions which were no essential part of the Constitution, which, in fact, had served rather to disguise it from the country, and which after clogging the wheels had brought the Government itself to a standstill. Moreover, large though his majority would

certainly be, they would come into the Chamber saddled more or less with pledges to their constituents which might serve to hamper rather than to help him. So he would stay where he was for the present, if possible, and rather than risk the delay, the excitement, and even the danger of an election, he would set some matters straight, and carry out a little electoral reform in order "to secure a more adequate representation of public opinion and greater stability for the Government."

MUSSOLINI AT THE BAR.—But, of course, such a way of getting into power and also of staying there would not be allowed to pass without a challenge; and Senator Albertini in particular, a man of eminence and Editor and proprietor of the *Corriere della Sera*, criticised this course of things in an important speech in the Chamber; while appreciating the achievements of the Fascista campaign and hoping that it would work out for the good of the country, he deplored what seemed to be a blow to those liberal principles that Italy had won for herself not without pain in the years that were past.

Mussolini, on his part, was not unmindful of all this, nor did he undervalue it, but, after all, that very Italian Liberalism itself had grown out of the French Revolution of 1789, which again, in some of its aspects, reflected the English Revolution of a hundred years earlier; "development" is a term congenial to the mind of Mussolini. Meantime he had given his mind deeply to this matter for a long time, and he was prepared to stand by what he had done. He was not there to destroy, but rather to restore the Constitution; and one line, in particular, he was determined upon—viz., to convince the country that true Liberalism is not to be confused with licence. But this would mean a clean



turn over of things, an overhauling of the Government machine, and an infusion of new blood into the personnel; the men of the old régime, who had come to think old age almost a qualification for office, must simply go, and young Italy must man the engine of State and run the train on lines carefully prepared and laid down for them by himself; that assemblage of ideas and principles that is named "Fascismo" which he had now in his mind Italy must have undiluted if she was to revive. That was why, eventually, he refused even to contemplate coalitions, or to ally himself with any party as such: the Government that was to make all things new must be a brand-new Government—Fascista, the whole Fascista, and nothing but Fascista; an uncompromising condition which could not be achieved in a moment, of course, as there were parties and individual persons also to be appeased.

The *Partito Popolare* was there to dispute the ground; and it was some time before the moderate section of it broke away and came to coalesce with the Fascisti. The Nationalist party, on the other hand, which had been earlier in the field and always working really for the same end, came into line more easily, leaving the problem of the Freemasons alone to be settled—a problem that could wait for another day, of which I hope to speak later.

**LISTENING FOR THE NOTE.**—It was a solemn moment for Italy; as if the great orchestra of Government were there, and each official in his place, with his own proper instrument in hand, were listening intently for the note—a note deep and clear, and one that all Italy could recognise—calling him and his country to come into tune with it.

After taking the oath to the King, Mussolini issued a significant circular to the Prefects :

“ Summoned by the confidence which the King reposes in me, I assume the Government of the country from to-day. I demand that all officials, from the highest to the lowest, shall do their duty intelligently, and with absolute devotion to the supreme interests of the country. I shall set the example.”

And my aim here will be only to indicate the way in which Mussolini has kept his pledge and made use of his power, and so to give the reader a taste of his treatment.

After stating his intention to stand loyally by foreign treaties, without, of course, regarding them as eternal, and not without a significant admonition to other Powers to treat Italy as an equal, not as an inferior, the Prime Minister faced round to the facts :

1. THE BUDGET.—“ We solemnly undertake to purify the Budget, and we shall purify it.”

(a) Until 1877, for instance, Finance and the Treasury had been under one and the same minister, but in that year a minister was appointed for each, with two stipends for the State to find instead of one; and although a committee of experts the very next year had pronounced this division of labour a profound mistake, no one had managed to mend the mischief—to suppress a portfolio was not likely to be popular with the staff—in all the forty years that had intervened.

Now, immediately on the resignation of one of the two ministers, Mussolini instead of appointing another to succeed him proceeded again to combine the two offices

under one well-chosen head in the person of Professor De Stefani; the two under secretaries continuing in office until the resignation of one of them, when his place also was not filled.

What happened now to the Budget? The reduction in successive years appeared as follows :

In 1922-1923 the deficit amounted to 3,586,000,000 lire.

In 1923, twelve months later, it amounted to 1,187,000,000.

In 1924-1925 the Minister estimated it would amount to not more than 700,000,000 lire; and in two or three years he expected to balance the Budget.

(b) *Civil Service*.—In various departments the staff was reduced, and, of course, the expenditure with it; and after placing a number of officials on the retired list and pensioning them off, their places were not filled.

(c) *Guardia Regia*.—This, which was a force for relieving the Army from police duties, had been recruited for the most part from the Regular Army, and had proved enormously expensive. It was now abolished, "most of the officers and men being re-drafted into the Army, while the best of the remainder were enrolled in the Carabinieri, and the rest dismissed"—another immense saving.

(d) *State Railways*.—War conditions were to be cleared up here, where corruptions of many kinds and very costly had crept in; a High Commissioner was appointed, therefore, to clean up these conditions; the staff was reduced, and the wages were reduced also, so as to bring them more into conformity with present

prices and with wages in other industries. A railway police force was appointed in the meantime to deal with railway thefts which had become common. In this last department it was expected that the deficit would be wiped out by the present year (1926).

(e) *The Fascista Squadre*.—This body having been created originally to meet the extraordinary conditions of the moment—viz., to save the country from the Soviet propaganda and the terrorism the Socialists and Communists had brought with them—those conditions for the most part having now disappeared, was demobilised.

As, however, there were still anti-national forces that might become a danger when a crisis came up, the "Volunteer Militia for National Safety," to which allusion has already been made, was instituted on January 15, 1923: it was to be recruited from the pick of the Fascisti, and is described as being "at the service of God and the Fatherland, and under the orders of the head of the Government." And its purpose is to assist the Army and the police forces "in maintaining internal public order, and to prepare the citizens for the defence of Italian interests in the world." Co-operation, you observe, comes in here again, and is directed against those forces of disruption and class warfare which always mean waste.

Furthermore, this particular step is characteristic in another respect as illustrating the higher motive of the movement, which was here to save money and to work for a higher end, the new force being unpaid, except in the case of a small number who are there to train it; or when individual members are serving outside their own commune. In the event of a mobilisation "the

Volunteer Militia is automatically absorbed into the Regular Army and Navy."

After all, if Italy was to be saved from the constant revolutionary interruptions of men who had ceased to care for their country, there must be within that country the constant presence of a particular type of men; men, that is, who were as ready to die for their country at home as they had been abroad; men who were guided by principle, and not merely by their pockets, and constituting a force that the King and the country could count upon at any moment; and in the particular country of which we are speaking that particular force is called "Fascista."

2. AGRICULTURE.—As Italy's prosperity depends upon her agriculture, this department demands special consideration at the hands of her Government.

Observe the several categories :

- (a) Landlords who rent out their estates.
- (b) Landlords who farm them directly.
- (c) Peasant proprietors.
- (d) Tenant farmers who farm their holdings by means of hired labour.
- (e) Peasants and farmers who work their holdings themselves (*The Awakening of Italy*, pp. 235, 236).

*Agriculture an Anxious Question.*—Each of the above has its own organisation, and when you bracket them all together you have before you "The Syndicate of a Particular District."

Again, when you bracket the several district syndicates together you have "The Provincial Federation of Agricultural Syndicates"; and this last, in every case,

must adhere to the "Federazione Italiana Sindacati Agricoli" (F.I.S.A.) and to the Fascista syndicate of that province. The Provincial Federation includes also representatives of the various industrial and trade syndicates of the province.

The land conditions in Italy being various, and the farming in some parts not very advanced, "The Militia of the Land" has been formed in order to promote a higher level of education in the science of farming; and with a view to this, young and active men are trained by experts to travel through the districts, to offer their services, and to give lectures and, if necessary, personal advice.

As regards labour conflicts, where both parties accept Fascismo conditions, the dispute must be referred to the arbitral organisation in each provincial federation; and where either of the parties is outside Fascismo a special arbiter is appointed. And the State only intervenes in the rare cases of absolute necessity and in the last resort.

As a matter of fact, the few disputes that have come up since Fascismo appeared on the stage have been soon and easily settled.

To assist farmers in drawing up agreements types of contract, for those who care to go by them, are provided by the Fascista agricultural corporation, being adapted to the various conditions of the country, and prefaced with an introduction explaining their purpose and recalling the motive of the movement.

As the farm labourers in Cremona had been the victims in a special way of the Red organisations, Luigi Villari gives a portion of the contract for that province, the introduction to which may be left to speak for itself.

After alluding to "the good feeling and cordial relations" which this contract seeks to establish "between the agriculturists (landlords and tenant farmers) and the labourers for the good of all social classes, for the increment of production and for the good of the country," it goes on to speak of the offer of wages being a fair offer, and of the hours being so arranged as "to assure to the labourer a period of rest adequate for his intellectual and moral improvement without hindering output; it sets up and gives wide diffusion to all forms of social provident institutions, which the renovated Fatherland assures for all its sons; it endeavours to deal with unemployment in the best way; it secures the rapid and equitable "settlement of all conflicts arising between the parties concerned by means of municipal control offices on a patriotic basis . . ."; and it concludes with a characteristic passage:

"As the greatness and prosperity of Italy is indissolubly bound up with that of her sons, the two solemn patriotic festivals shall be recognised and exalted: April 21 the Birthday of Rome, and November 4 the Festival of Victory."

3. ELECTORAL REFORM.—Parliament, as we have seen, had been going downhill for years past, and the interests of the nation had been made to give way to the self-interest of those who were supposed to be governing it, until the multitude had ceased to look to it, and even good statesmen were almost in despair.

It was not merely the men that wanted mending, but the very machine itself; and Mussolini had to ask himself if this mending could be done before going to the country. He would like the new Government, from which he was to expect so much, to come into a new

Chamber; and the Bill he presented to Parliament in the summer of 1923 proposed to make the whole country into one constituency; while each voter was to vote for the party list which he liked best, "each list comprising a number of candidates for each of the fifteen constituencies into which the country is divided." The result would show the position of parties according to the mind of the country, while "the party which secures relatively the largest number of votes has a right to two-thirds of the seats in the Chamber, the remaining third being distributed among the other parties on a basis of proportional representation."

The Prime Minister recommended this Bill in a speech so eloquent as to win over his audience and to command an overwhelming vote of confidence—303 to 140; while the Bill itself, when it went up to the Senate four months later, after an able defence of its principles by Signor Acerbo, Under Secretary to the Presidency of the Council, was passed by the large majority of 165 votes to 41.

All along this time, it must be remembered, the ball was kept rolling by Mussolini by means of "short pithy articles in *Gerarchia*," as well as by speeches of great power and point; nor am I unmindful of modifications and developments that may have come up later. But my purpose here is mainly to put people into Mussolini's mood, and to give them a taste of his treatment—a treatment which they may appreciate more fully by turning to Chapters XI. and XII. in *The Awakening of Italy*, where they will see "Fascismo at Work" and "The Carrying Out of the Programme."



## CHAPTER XI

### DEEDS, NOT WORDS

AFTER more than twelve months of strenuous and intense effort, Mussolini, feeling the time had come to give to the country an account of his stewardship, asked the King to dissolve the Chamber.

In the short interval of time from November, 1922, to December, 1923, the Prime Minister had been able to give to the people of Italy a taste of his power; and if he had ushered in that period with a *coup d'état*, he was now able to wind it up with a *fait accompli*.

"Work is the strength of speech"; and Mussolini, who had pledged himself in 1922 to work for his country, was able now to point his country to work actually done; and on December 31, 1923—the occasion of the seventy-eighth Cabinet Council since he had come into power—the Prime Minister announced his decision to the Government; the King dissolved the Chamber on January 25, 1924; April 6 was fixed for the General Election; and Parliament was to meet on May 24, the anniversary of Italy's declaration of war against Austria.

A SERENE VERDICT.—In the Report of the Cabinet, published along with the King's decree, Mussolini, after referring to the March on Rome and to the condition of excitement in which that event had left the country, went on to explain that he had no intention at the time of taking advantage of that mood, but now, when things were more settled, he asked for "a serene verdict" on work actually done and on further work

that he was proposing to do. Lines of policy, he said, had been laid down; and it was for the country carefully to consider them. Meantime they would be able to see that, while he had left the Constitution intact, he had found ways of making a better use of it than in the past.

As for the State, it was no part of its duty to adopt one party at the expense of the rest; much less must it affect to be outside, and to have no concern in the struggle of parties; but always and everywhere the State must be "the living image of the country's thought; the jealous guardian of its tradition; the defender of the law; the chief inspirer of national sentiment." Everyone must be awake now and come forward for his country; nor must he be content simply to make the Chamber and then to let it go its own way; no, he must call it to account, and listen carefully to its promises for the future.

Nor, again, must the country look to the Chamber alone, as if it were "the fulcrum" for all else to turn upon. On the contrary, every several organ of Government—the Crown, the Executive, the Chamber, the Senate—has its proper function to mind; nor should there be any confusion of functions, but rather the co-operation of all for the country's good.

Three days later Mussolini made a great fighting speech in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome: he was not too pleased, he said, with the prospect of an election; some mud, indeed, had been stirred already merely at the mention of it; and his hearers must not be teased by the tricky terms of men who would lure them away by craft from the direct lines of the enterprise before them.

A FIGHTING SPEECH.—People were talking already of

a return to "the normal"; if they meant by this that Fascismo could now dispense with fighting and with a bodyguard of defence, he would remind them that in last January alone there had been as many as sixteen attacks on the Band, resulting in two deaths and many casualties; others, again, were complaining of not being allowed their "liberty," when they were asking really for "licence"; and Fascismo was here to teach them to distinguish these terms.

As to political parties, Mussolini would ignore them as such, his idea evidently being to buttonhole the best in every bunch and to bind them to the Band, never mind what their label might be; with a preference, however, for experts and scholars, and especially for men with a good war record in the interventionist days.

Fascismo must be free of all alliances, electoral or political, with the parties around. The Band had had its troubles, of course, in the past twelve months; many had seceded from its ranks, some had been expelled; indeed, that body had been "entirely dissolved and reconstructed within the past fifteen months"; and it was all the better for that, perhaps. But even those who had left it were looking back wistfully, and would rally to its ranks if some strong call were to come to them in the future. Meantime what Fascismo had fought for it meant to hold fast, and to fight for yet more.

The speech, which met with a great reception, was followed soon after by another fiery one addressed to several thousand officers of the National Militia, in which he indicated the line of their duties, expressing even a hope that they would help to guarantee the freedom of the ballot-box in the coming elections.

## PART IV

# THE THIRD MOMENT

### CHAPTER XII

#### LAW—LIBERTY—LICENCE

WHAT is known as the Third Moment in the history of this enterprise, the moment when the process of digestion is giving place gradually to assimilation, may be said to date, roughly speaking, from the summer of 1925, and my aim here is only to indicate and to illustrate the line of policy Fascismo is pursuing, with a view to clinching its own argument and carrying it up into the Constitution itself.

In attempting this I shall follow the facts and keep in touch with the reports and comments of a correspondent living on the spot at the time, breathing the atmosphere of the movement in its native home, one who, without agreeing with every line of that policy, is anxious evidently to present to his hearers, week by week, as fair and well-balanced a statement as possible of what is passing before his eyes, or sounding in his ears, at the moment of writing.\*

Unadulterated Fascismo remains with Mussolini as the prescription for his country: the State should be the expression of the nation, and Fascismo the expression of the State, which being interpreted signifies that everyone, and the interests of everyone are to be represented, and the entire effort to be controlled by one principal consideration—viz., the co-operation of

\* The Rome Correspondent of *The Tablet*.

all for the nation's welfare, and in order to promote the social unity of Italy, "which," as Enrico Corradini declares, "in the long run has triumphed over each dissolving force that has been seen in its story, especially in recent crises."

In the very course of criticising the Government's attitude at the moment to Catholic Labour organisations (he is writing in October, 1925), the correspondent vindicates its fairmindedness, alluding decisively to "occasion after occasion here since October, 1922, when a matter of straight justice has been seen and the claim acceded to."

"LICENCE" NOT TO BE MISTAKEN FOR "LIBERTY."—On the other hand, any man or group of men that means mischief, and is working openly or furtively against the ruling Power—King, and Constitution, Nation, State, Fascism—is to be shut out of public office. Not only so, but if subversive forces of this kind go out of the country to strike this blow from a distance, the hand of authority will reach them there also (*Tablet*, October 9, 1925)—only one among many illustrations of the truth that Italy, having now come to her senses, will fight to the death rather than be dragged down again into the desperate conditions of five years back.

Under conditions so uncompromising as these the Fascist Government soon found itself face to face with the Freemasons in Italy: indeed, the Secret Societies Law, passed in November, 1925, by a vote that was almost unanimous in the Chamber and afterwards in the Senate, may be said to have brought to a close a struggle Mussolini had had with the Freemasons since his Socialist days, some fourteen years before, when he set himself to withstand their influence within the ranks

wished to put this principle of "freedom of the Press" to its full test.

Two months later the same writer was in a position to state that the system of Government which Mussolini had found (1919-1922) "had completely broken down," while he was able by that time also to add that "acts of violence under the new régime do, in fact, tend to decrease"; and, furthermore, in reference to the case already quoted, he declared in so many words that: "The Government has taken prompt steps in dismissing Prefects and State officials who showed themselves unequal to the occasion, and the Fascist authorities at once dismissed local leaders who ought to have been able to keep their followers in order" (*Tablet*, October 17, 1925; letter from Rome dated October 9).

So much for the "freedom of the Press."

Next, how does the working man find himself under the new conditions?

CORPORATIONS, NOT SYNDICATES.—Here the transition of the Third Moment is from Working Men's Syndicates to Fascist Corporations, the aim being so to arrange conditions as to replace the policy of class warfare with co-operation for the good of the country; and, in the second place, the policy of the subversive and the anti-national is to be replaced by the national (not "nationalist") in this department of the country's life.

Under these new conditions, then, when he is looking out for a club, guild, or group to settle into, the working man in Italy to-day is no longer under any temptation to join any dangerous confederation of labour, but finds himself represented by the Corporations—a part of Fascism, and entirely patriotic.

In October of the year 1925 "the Confederation of

Labour" and "the Corporations" agreed to recognise one another as mutually representative—the only representatives of Capital and Labour; and these recognised Associations of Capital and Labour have a legal status given to them, with what is known as a "Magistracy of Labour" to control and to adjudicate; other associations, officially speaking, being left out.

FASCISM AND WELFARE WORK.—Of another striking development of Fascismo Mr. Yeats-Brown has given us an interesting account in the pages of the *Spectator* (October 16, 1926)—viz., the "Dopolavero," or welfare centres, of which a thousand have been started already in Italy. In one instance he cites, that of Genoa, there are as many as 8,800 railwaymen inscribed, 4,400 dock labourers, and 52,000 other workmen.

If I transcribe a passage from this article it may serve to give the reader a further taste of Mussolini's treatment :

"A man's wages in Turin are approximately 7s. a day. His food costs 1s., and accommodation, if a married man, perhaps 6d. Allowing for his family, he can put by 15s. a week in the 'Dopolavero' Thrift Society, and still have enough for reasonable recreation. At the Fiat works, where I had the privilege of spending a most interesting day, the workmen have the following facilities provided for them without cost : (a) Gymnasium, (b) a boating club of thirty boats and ten skiffs, (c) a bicycling club, (d) a football club, (e) an Alpine club, (f) a bowling club; also a library of 15,000 volumes, reading-rooms, rest centres, a dramatic society, a musical society, a thrift and insurance association, and a free cinema" (*Spectator*, October 16, 1926, p. 619).

**PREFECTS WITH MORE POWER.**—The Prefects, the direct representatives of State and Government, find their power and authority largely increased under the new régime, the position of the President of the Council being stabilised and reinforced; while in order to find a remedy, as far as possible, for the personal quarrels of small town councils, and to dispose of "Belfry Politics," every commune of less than 5,000 inhabitants is now to benefit by the institution of the Podesta—an administrator nominated by the Government.

Meantime the City of Rome has come in for special treatment, and finds itself, under the new régime, in a special category, with a Governor and with conditions of its own—an illustration of vigorous administration which calls for some special comment.

**GOVERNOR OF ROME.**—In August, 1925, after a long period of financial difficulties, which gave little promise of solution, owing to political quarrels on the City Council—difficulties which had been only patched up, from time to time, by monetary assistance from the State—the Council of Ministers decided to appoint a Governor of Rome in the person of a Senator of distinguished ability, Cremonesi by name.

The city had been under his direction as Royal Commissioner for two years past, during which he had straightened things out marvellously, doing a power of work, and appreciating the unique position of Rome as "capital and seat of two diplomatic bodies" and as "heir of past ages"—a condition that seemed to call for reconstruction on a new basis. Words soon gave place to deeds, which is a favourite condition of the Prime Ministers; and the amount of work carried out in the two years (1923 to 1925) is described as amazing.



Senator Cremonesi, brother of Mgr. Cremonesi, the Papal Almoner, was appointed new official "Governor of Rome" on January 1, 1926, when the civil ceremony of installation was followed by another, full of interest and significance and illustrating that spirit of co-operation which is a chief feature of Fascismo. After the reception at the Campidoglio, the new Governor went down on the invitation of the Jesuit Fathers to the Gesù for the solemn *Te Deum*, at which the Cardinal-Vicar of his Holiness was to officiate.

During the period of irritation consequent upon the changes of 1870, the Cross on the Capitol and the Cross on the Colosseum had both been removed. The former was restored last year; and on Sunday, November 29, 1925, at the moment when Signor Mussolini was issuing a remarkable message to the representatives of Italy abroad on the subject of the seventh centenary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi, and of the celebrations to commemorate that event, the ceremony was going forward in the Colosseum of replacing the base for the Cross to be erected there—a ceremony that was carried out with "real religious solemnity; under it was wood from Gethsemane and rock from Golgotha, sent by Mgr. Barlassina, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Senator Cremonesi shares with the Government the credit of having restored these two crosses on the Capitol and on the Colosseum respectively. Meantime the entire City of Rome is being reorganised—a step which will involve the cutting of new streets, the opening up of new spaces, and perhaps the construction of a new market place.

Of the new regulations as to public dances with a view to saving young girls from the demoralising effect

of late hours and a loose running about in the streets—a subject of so much anxiety to many of us in England—and, again, of the attempt now making to standardise the dress, I need not speak particularly, unless it be to say in regard of the latter reform that the aim is to start a crusade for a national fashion in dress which has been placed under the leadership of the Queen of Italy, in order that foreign fashions may not be allowed to dominate. With a view to this a Committee has been formed, including the Queen and also the wife of the President of the Senate, Mme. Bice Tittoni; and designs by famous Italian artists will be exhibited and published; lectures will be delivered and competitions held “in order to develop a taste for national material and national designs.” It is possible, too, that official communiqués may be issued; and the Vatican is lending its support to the movement. Signora Gallenga, a famous woman painter and now a dress designer, has already made one design, likely to become famous and known as a “Bonifacio VIII. mantle,” in grey chiffon velvet with a salmon-pink lining; the design being from the chasuble of the famous Pope of that name—the Pope of Dante’s day—in nine shades of gold (Rome correspondent, *Daily Express*).

## CHAPTER XIII

### ITALY AND OTHERS

IN days like the present, when distances are disappearing, barriers breaking down, and means of communication multiplying, a movement so fundamental in its character as the one before us was certain to extend beyond its own immediate borders, and to exert an influence upon the world outside. And so it comes to pass not only that we find ourselves looking over the fence at Fascismo, but also find Fascismo looking over the fence at us. Mussolini has appreciated this from the first. "Fascismo," he said in his famous election speech in January, 1924, "although a typically Italian phenomenon, has now assumed the aspect of a world-wide experiment." It represents the "repudiation of the whole Socialist and Democratic doctrine; it has risen boldly against that mass of theories which the experience of contemporary history has inexorably condemned." And again: "Fascismo, as a doctrine of national development, of force, of discipline, of repugnance for all the commonplaces of demagoguery, and for the antics of the politicians, is a beacon of light at which all the peoples of the earth are gazing." "The experience of contemporary history has inexorably condemned!" Here you have Mussolini facing experience and fastening on to the fact.

Within the last five years only, in Europe, he calculates that some 200,000,000 days of work have been lost owing to industrial disputes (*Spectator*, October 16,

1926, art. by F. Yeats-Brown). Meantime the slogan that accompanies all this agitation, however soothing it may be, will never restore to us the prodigious waste and want that such a sacrifice of working hours implies.

COMING TO TERMS.—And although the language of the agitator at the moment often sounds convincing enough to be conclusive, the larder looks none the better for it later on. On the other hand, still keeping close to the fact, what had the Italian railwayman to say to a French traveller's question as to how he found himself now under Fascismo? "I don't know," he replied, "whether it is right or wrong, but certainly we are better off than we were before."

Or, again, listen to Mr. Henry W. Taft, stepbrother of Chief Justice Taft in America, and to what he has to say after a winter spent in Italy, six weeks of which had been passed in Rome, and after motoring from Florence in the north to Naples and Salerno in the south. "Mussolini," he declares, "has enormously improved the general conditions in Italy. He has saved the nation from Bolshevism and Communism, restored internal peace and order, put the people to work, and revived in them a national spirit"—a verdict which is confirmed by the impression of one of my clerical brethren, after a sojourn of four months in Italy in the year 1925. In the course of a discussion on a Paper which I had read on this subject he said: "During my stay in that country I made a point of ascertaining, as far as I could, the mind of the country upon the question of Mussolini and his movement; and I can only say that all whom I spoke to, while they did not agree necessarily with every step he has taken, did agree in saying emphatically that the Prime Minister

had proved himself the saviour of his country, while some thought he might prove to be the saviour of Europe."

Mussolini, then, does not condone the mischief that is waiting there for someone to mend, or ignore the genuine grievance there is to grapple with; he is not denying the difficulty simply because he denies the power of Socialism to meet it. But after looking it fairly in the face not merely as an abstract theory in the mind, but in the setting of the actual world, where it must settle itself sooner or later if it is to settle at all, he sees the "remedy" of Socialism proving invariably worse than the disease; he sees men in deadly earnest, and, in spite of the repeated verdicts of history, offering this prescription at the outset as the cure for a real evil; and he sees the same men later on waking up to the worry and waste of a revolution which leaves the patient worse than it found him. What he found in the several communes of Italy where this "remedy" had been tried was "extravagance, inefficiency, wastefulness, and graft"; he found everywhere "a multiplication of officials, public servants, State workmen, overpaid and underworked"; and along with its financial policy and State interference in trade it brought in its train the paralysis of private enterprise, the taxing of capital "to the verge of confiscation"; while by fostering class warfare and discontent it provided a congenial soil for Bolshevik propaganda, and for its final and fatal result, "bankruptcy, chaos, and revolution."

Socialism, then, in that strict meaning of the term which alone concerns us, and in the hands of serious reformers, signifying as it does State ownership in all

the means of production, distribution, and exchange, with a line under the word "all," offers a challenge to that order of things that men have lived in from the first; and when looked into closely is found to contradict fact.

**PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY.**—Some of these means of production the State does own, of course, and we call that ownership "Public Property"; and the individual also owns some, and we call that "Private Property."

On the other hand, when it is asserted that the State should own all these things, as having an inherent right to own them all, and that the individual therefore should own none of these things, because he has no right to them, this is Socialism, and this, Mussolini would say, is false. And certainly the Catholic Church in Italy will support him in saying so. This it is, I repeat, that Church and State in that country are combining to challenge; and the meaning of this is that always and everywhere the Church will support any Government in standing by the principle of private ownership as being a principle "essentially moral and normal to man" (see *The Catholic Church and the Principle of Private Property*, Hilaire Belloc, Catholic Truth Society).

It is easy, of course, to show the abuses, even the flagrant abuses to which private ownership is subject; and such abuses are not only to be deplored, but as far as possible to be remedied. The Catholic Church, too, is at one, no doubt, with multitudes of people, in wishing to see more individuals owning, and in deploring the modern condition of things in which capital comes to be concentrated in a few hands.

But believing the principle of private ownership to

be a right principle, and because it is never right to do wrong, or to do evil that good may come, she never gives her countenance to any attack on the principle of private ownership as such.

CONTENTMENT, NOT SATISFACTION. — Furthermore, while not denying that there is good for us here as well as hereafter, and that where better administration can improve our circumstances and conditions it is a Christian duty to promote it, she warns us not to look for our good in our temporal goods; and this because the turning of our temporal goods to our good can never be effected in spite of us, and can be done, if it is to be done at all, by our own individual effort and character only.

In other words, since our end lies not in the natural but in the supernatural order, we are warned at the outset not to look for it where it cannot be found, which means that we are to practise contentment in this world, and to look for satisfaction only in the world to come. Such is the broad truth and the splendid hint religion gives us to start with if only we will give heed to it. Once a man faces this frankly he understands the meaning of our Lord's words: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"; and also how that measure of joy that is within the reach of the poor equally with the rich is a condition that "no man taketh from us." No chopping or changing of Governments, then, or any administrative law can alter a fact, when Nature herself has said it and God has ordained it.

This is how it comes to pass, sooner or later, that Socialism clashes with the Catholic Church; and this is what we mean by saying that Socialism contradicts fact.

If this is not realised generally it is, perhaps, because the term has been used so loosely as to include any sort of effort seriously to improve the conditions of our poorer brethren, and to mitigate the inevitable inequalities of life.

This, too, is why, when Mussolini broke away from Socialism, some thought he was breaking away from the poor, whereas he was really abandoning a "remedy" which he saw would end in ruin to rich and poor alike.

AN ASSUMPTION THAT IS FALSE AND FATAL.—No; Socialism does not wish to see more men owning the means of production, because her ambition is to see the State owning them all. Not only so, but as time advances and earnest men come more and more to be impressed by the shocking conditions under which so many have to live, that temporal side of things comes to absorb them quite, and the assumption creeps into their minds, stealthily and unawares, that the day of State ownership, should it ever come, will bring with it to each individual "an equal share of temporal goods," while it will serve "to avert equal evil from all"; the meaning of which is that man's good does lie in the natural order, and that he cannot attain to that good by his own effort (*Essays and Reviews*, Orestes Brownson, p. 502).

How impressive, for example, the words of De Lammenais sound even to-day after a hundred years; and how convincing—at first—his appeal! "What is it the people wish, what is it they claim? . . . Is it not the abolition of the reign of force, in order to substitute that of intelligence and right? Is it not the effective recognition and social realisation of equality,



inseparable from liberty, the necessary condition of which, in the organisation of the State, is election, the first basis of the Christian community . . . that the few shall no longer exercise an exclusive influence for their own profit in the administration of the interests of all . . . that the goods, destined by the Heavenly Father for all His children, shall become accessible to all; that human fraternity shall cease to be a mockery and a word without meaning? In short, suscitated by God to pronounce the final judgment upon the old social order, they have summoned it to appear, and, recalling the ages which have crumbled away, they have said to it: 'I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. . . . I interrogate you on the law. Respond.' And the old social order is silent, for it has nothing to answer, and it raises its hand against the people and against God! Its doom is registered on high. . . . We cannot, then, but recognise in what is passing under our eyes the action of the Christian principle. . . . The few have taken possession of the earth; they have taken possession of it by wresting from all others even the smallest part of the common heritage, and the people will that men live as brothers according to the divine commandment. They battle for justice and charity, they battle for the doctrine which Jesus Christ came to preach to the world, and which will save it in spite of the powers of the world" (*Affaires de Rome*, pp. 319-321; quoted in Brownson's *Essays*, pp. 500, 501).

On reading a passage like the above, "the people" wake up to find themselves no longer sinners, like others, but saints; they feel flattered to hear not only that the old social order is silent, with nothing to say

for itself, but that God is on their side, and therefore they are bound to conquer; that temporal goods were destined to be accessible equally to everyone; that the earth has been wrested from them, and that the moment has come for them to battle for it and to win it back again. And, with all the heroic sound it carries with it, how almost sinful it seems, and how unpopular certainly to interrogate this question-begging passage, and to separate the chaff from the wheat! And yet when you weigh it up, how alive it is with mischief, what a stimulus it lends to class warfare, and what an incentive it affords to revolution and even bloodshed!

Montalembert has given some account of De Lammenais and what happened to him; of his paper, the *Avenir*; and of the departure, after that paper had been discontinued, of its three chief editors to Rome—De Lammenais himself, Lacordaire the brilliant Dominican, and Montalembert, who records their experiences. The purpose of their journey to Rome was to submit to the Sovereign Pontiff the questions they had been broaching, promising at the same time absolute submission to the Papal decision. They had been left to discuss matters with absolute freedom for a whole year, but they wanted the Pope's verdict on their conclusions.

This verdict was given first in the form of a long silence, broken only by a letter of admonition from the Pope through Cardinal Pacca warning them gently that their discussions had given pain to him, but that he would examine them carefully; and afterwards in the form of an interview with the Pope, who received them kindly, without, however, one single allusion to what he knew they had come for—a delicate hint intended to save them from the disaster of a formal condemnation.

Lacordaire appreciated this hint, and, determined to act upon it, left Rome, and called upon his companions to come with him.

Montalembert followed this advice; De Lammenais refused to follow it; and after waiting in Rome for four months for a decision which he insisted upon demanding from the Pope—"I will push matters, and urge for an immediate decision"—in a fit of passion he returned to France, openly avowing his intention to restart the *Avenir*, and so to defy the very authority to which he had professed to defer. The consequence of this was a formal judgment in the shape of an Encyclical Letter, dated June, 1834, in which his new doctrines were "manifestly condemned," although no mention was made of him by name.

THE POPE AND PROPERTY.—Place this condemnation on the part of Pope Gregory XVI. side by side with another Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII., forty-four years later, in 1878, and you will find the same vigorous attack directed against Socialism, Communism, and Nihilism, and specifically against those who "spurred on by greedy hankering after things present, which is the root of all evils, which, some coveting, have erred from the faith, they attack the right of property, sanctioned by the law of nature; and with signal depravity, while pretending to feel solicitous about the needs, and anxious to satisfy the requirements of all, they strain every effort to seize upon and hold in common all that has been individually acquired by title of lawful inheritance, through intellectual or manual labour, or economy in living."

So far Socialism is frankly condemned, as frankly in 1878 as it had been previously in 1834. But lest anyone

should infer from this that the Pope was ignoring the rights and the condition of the poor, let him pass on again to a later Encyclical still, the Letter from the same Pontiff on "The Condition of the Working Classes," and read what Leo XIII. has to say on the subject of "The Living Wage," and what steps should be taken to secure it; and they will see not only with what consistency and directness the root mischief of Socialism is exposed and denounced throughout, but also that this denunciation is not in order to surrender the cause of our poorer brethren, but to save it.

Consider, for instance, such a passage as the following :

"In these and similar questions (*i.e.*, of the living wage)—such as, for example, the hours of labour in different trades, the sanitary precautions to be observed in factories and workshops, etc.—in order to supersede undue interference on the part of the State, especially as circumstances, times, and localities differ so widely, it is advisable that recourse be had to Societies or Boards . . . or to some other mode of safeguarding the interests of the wage-earners; the State being appealed to, should circumstances require, for its sanction and protection."

And again : "If a workman's wages be sufficient to enable him to maintain himself, his wife, and his children in reasonable comfort, he will not find it difficult, if he be a sensible man, to study economy . . . and to put by some little savings and thus secure a small income." What then? "We have seen," the letter goes on, "that this great labour question cannot be solved save by assuming as a principle that private ownership must be held sacred and inviolable. The law,

therefore, should favour ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many as possible of the humbler class to become owners. Many excellent results will follow from this; and first of all, property will certainly become more equitably divided. . . . If working people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share in the land, the consequence will be that the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over, and the respective classes will be brought nearer to one another. A further consequence will result in the greater abundance of the fruits of the earth. Men always work harder and more readily when they work on that which belongs to them. . . . And a third advantage would spring from this: men would cling to the country in which they were born; for no one would exchange his country for a foreign land if his own afforded him the means of living a decent and happy life." And for an uncompromising attack on the substance of Socialism: "The right to possess private property is derived from Nature, not from man; and the State has the right to control its use in the interests of the public good alone, but by no means to absorb it altogether. The State would therefore be unjust and cruel if under the name of taxation it were to deprive the private owner of more than is fitting" (Encyclical Letter, *Rerum Novarum*, May 15, 1891).

Anyone who will have the patience, without prejudice, to weigh up such passages as I have cited, and to place them side by side with positions Mussolini has arrived at, "after protracted thought," will begin to appreciate the security and the significance of the support the Prime Minister is receiving to-day, at least in the main lines of his policy, at the hands of the Church.

His own experience confirms the teaching of the Church that, when we have done our utmost to improve our temporal conditions, they have no power in themselves to satisfy us. "I have had a vast experience in these matters," Mussolini declares, "an experience which has been valuable in enabling me to learn the psychology of crowds and obtain a visual and tactile sensibility, so to speak, of their needs and aspirations. One of the most grotesque things in Socialist literature is the idea that the happiness of mankind depends exclusively on the satisfaction of its material needs." And he insists that it is vain to attempt to settle industrial disputes unless we bring a high standard of life to bear upon them (*Spectator*, October, 1926; Yeats-Brown).

THE STATE TO STAND BACK.—Feeling as he did that the confusion he saw around him grew out of a forgetfulness of these first principles, he began by calling men up to a higher plane and to a spiritual view of things; and then, turning round to the State, he waved it back on to its proper base, and bade it attend to its own business—a business, he protests, which is "not to be a merchant, a manufacturer, a farmer, or even a railway owner; for whenever it has tried to do these things the results have been disastrous, not only from an economic and financial point of view, but also on account of the demoralising effect which these activities produce on the bureaucracy, and on the people as a whole."

Meantime a movement like the one before us may endeavour to conceal its source, and may take on the colour of the particular country where it penetrates, without losing its identity; and the conditions we have been contemplating in Italy are reflected to-day more

or less clearly in every other country of Europe, and even beyond it. And this, not merely because human nature is the same everywhere, but because the chief source of the movement is everywhere the same.

In other words, "the cells of enterprise" and "the system of the nucleus," devised for controlling Trade Union authority and meant for all mankind, were made in Moscow; and in any country they manage to invade, every group in that country, whether political, social, or economic, if it is not to lose its own identity and to sacrifice its self-respect sooner or later, must face round and confront them; must put its foot down and take its stand.

Always and everywhere the advent of this system signifies one and the same thing—viz., the stirring up of class warfare and the taking advantage of any industrial dispute that presents itself, in order to undermine the Government of the country and to establish a Soviet régime.

Italy found it so; and anyone who will study Chapter V. in Villari's *Awakening of Italy* will see how faithfully her experience is reflected elsewhere. He will be able to appreciate the various types of strike marching as it were in procession past him; and he will find it easy then to recognise their counterparts in other countries. He will come to see how easy it is for governments to be "snared" by such terms as "Peaceful Picketing," "Liberty," or "Freedom of the Press"; and how all this may be made to cover licence and lawlessness; and when he hears of persons being attacked while travelling in vehicles, as a highwayman would attack in olden days, it will seem like Italy and her experiences all over again. Now, as then,

occupants will be seen turning out of their traps, while their belongings are scattered in the road; or, again, men being warned with threats not to enrol in the special constabulary, and afterwards being bullied or insulted if they dare to ignore such a menace. They will see persons who have presumed to disregard the orders of local councils of action "seized by itinerant pickets in proper bandit fashion and arraigned before a revolutionary tribunal"—a painful likeness of what happened in Italy six years ago, and, as in Italy in those days, they will find this behaviour more or less condoned at official meetings. There is no question of the right of men to strike, under certain circumstances and conditions—it may or may not be legitimate in the particular instance—and where it does happen it concerns the two parties to the contract in question; but it is another matter altogether when such a dispute is used improperly, when it is "improved" and "developed," caught up into the context of a world-wide revolutionary machine, and pressed into the purpose of "direct action"—another name for a bold attack upon the Constitutional Government of the particular country.

IN FRANCE.—A first attempt of this kind was made in France in 1920, when a list of industries was drawn up in a carefully considered order, with a view to a series of strikes and with revolution for its ultimate aim. And if the attempt failed it was because M. Millerand, no enemy to any genuine Trade Union movement, but knowing how to distinguish the true from the false, would have "no truck with Bolshevism"; and proceeded to detain the offenders in prison until the Trade Union leaders had realised their mistake. Meantime, what had come of it? Thousands of working men, who



had been dragged into a strike, not to improve their conditions, but to wreck their country, woke up afterwards to find the forces of labour divided, without a single man in the country being the better for it.

Afterwards, when the Civic League and the National Republican League had to be formed for the protection of the community, the extremists turned round and called this "Fascism," which in substance and in principle no doubt it was. For, after all, the question is, not whether you are wearing a black shirt or a white one, or whether you are waving the Tricolour or the Union Jack, but whether any self-respecting Trade Union, political party, or individual is to look on tamely while whole industries are being wrecked, numberless families betrayed into want, economic issues confused with revolutionary aims, and the whole country threatened with ruin.

In the instance before us, in France, the agitation "was started against the community, and the community broke it" (*Fortnightly Review*, October, 1925; "Is there Protection against Bolshevism?" by John Bell).

AND IN ENGLAND.—The same conditions, again, were reflected in England in the May of last year (1926), when an industrial strike in the coal trade, which concerned the two contracting parties, was engineered by others for ends that are distinct and not legitimate—viz., to hold up the country, to punish every family in it, and to challenge the Constitution.

In this instance it broke as a surprise upon many people, when Cardinal Bourne, in fearless and direct words, denounced the General Strike from the pulpit

as immoral; and when he drew a distinction, of the utmost importance, between an industrial strike in which the owners and miners had a dispute to settle, and, on the other hand, a political, or more strictly speaking a revolutionary strike, which holds a pistol to the head of everyone in the community and threatens to stab the Constitution to its heart.

It came as a further surprise to many when it was pointed out that such a declaration as the Cardinal's was not political; that it carried with it no interference whatever in the coal dispute as such or any want of sympathy with the miners; that, on the contrary, it "was based solely on solid and universally admitted principles of Christian ethics and moral theology, which teach us that all legitimate authority comes from God, and in its own sphere speaks with the authority of God"—a principle which remains the same whatever political party may be in power, and which looks for its sanction to the teaching of St. Paul and to the pages of the New Testament: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power resisteth the Ordinance of God" (Ep. Romans xiii.) (*Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*, quoted in the *Universe*, June 4, 1926).

The mere enunciation of this principle, which had the effect of stopping at once a strike of 500 men in the north of England, coupled with the almost startling reaction in the country, with its instantaneous response to the signal of distress, opened the eyes of many to what had been going on for some time past; and to the fact that mischief had been brewing and even revolutionary steps contemplated for months, nay, even for

years past, and all this not without some official sanction from the leaders.

The Government no doubt was aware of this and very rightly prepared for the worst; no doubt it knew, and it was its duty, of course, to know that the policy of "Direct Action" had not only been broached, but formally adopted in England as part of the tactics of organised labour as far back as the year 1919; that in August of the following year—Italy's year of tyranny and terror—the Chairman of the Executive Committee of that party had laid it down in specific terms. "If the Government," he said, "could not run this country in a peaceful manner without interfering with other nations, they might be compelled *against all Constitutionalism to chance doing something to take the country into their own hands*" (italics my own)—a policy which was confirmed four years later at the Hull Trade Union Congress in 1924; while at the Scarborough Congress of the year 1925 the General Purposes Committee were taking steps to consult the whole of the unions as to the method of carrying it out (*Quarterly Review*, July, 1926; art. by Sir Lynden Macassey, K.B.E.).

The General Strike in England, coming, as it did, some time after all this, woke up the people of this country to its true significance and made the nation think; but some members of the Labour party are disposed still to speak of that strike not as a bad thing in itself, but only as a thing that was badly managed. However this may be, in England, as in Italy before it, there has come a climax and an awakening, and with it a certainty that the country will defend itself against any attempt of this kind to tyrannise over the nation and dictate to it; and numbers to-day in England,

whether they agree or not with Lord Asquith in politics, will honour him for the stand he has made recently in regard of the leadership of the Liberal party, and of that distinction between liberty and licence upon which the stand in question may be taken to insist.

FASCISMO EXPLAINED TO AMERICA.—From the very outset Mussolini has been anxious that the almost super-human effort he is making for his country should be appreciated abroad as well as at home, on the ground that the problem he is attempting to solve is more or less the same all over Europe and beyond it; and more than four years ago, in February, 1923, when Prince Gelasio Caetani, a minister of his own choice, was about to set sail for America, as King Victor Emmanuel's Ambassador, Mussolini asked him to explain to the American people how it had come to pass that the Fascisti were ruling to-day in Italy; and in the Ambassador's attempt to do so, in the pages of *Our World*, he wrote :

“ For over four years (he was writing in 1923) Europe, upset by the after-effects of the Great War, has been engaged in painful, and so far vain, attempts . . . to return to a normal and well-balanced life. During those years the various political parties of Italy have sought for a solution of the nation's after-war problems, mostly with a purpose of satisfying some selfish interest, with the result that the country has been ceaselessly tormented and agitated. In the heart of the people, however, there was a feeling that ultimate safety depended upon the sacrifice of personal interests for the welfare of the community; the people suffered silently in the hope that their sacrifice would at last bear fruit. Meanwhile subversive elements grew more

powerful, threatening to bring ruin ultimately to the country. Then the national conscience awoke and rebelled. All that was best in the country, the youth yet uncontaminated by selfishness, the middle class, the soundest elements among the workmen and peasants, tired of illusion, and those of all classes who, fighting strenuously for the victory of the Italian arms, had forged the common bond of devotion to their country, united in the so-called 'Fasci di combattimento' (which can be translated 'Bands of Veterans') and bravely faced the Red danger, not hesitating when necessary to shed their own blood. Not only Bolshevism had to be fought, but it was also necessary to rebuild the economic, social, and political structure of the country at the cost, if necessary, of new personal sacrifice. Under the flag of the Fascismo and the guidance of Mussolini and other high-minded men, the Italian people have fought also against those base methods of politics which, by splitting the country into numerous and useless parties, were making public affairs chiefly a means to advance personal ambitions. The victory is a lasting one because it has brought to the surface some of the fundamental qualities of the Italian people which were latent as far as its political life is concerned, but which anyone acquainted with the soul of the people and with their thrifty strenuous efforts to combat difficulties could not ignore as among the best assets of the country."

"Party divisions are fading before the broader and deeper conception that the welfare of Italy must predominate over any personal consideration, before a high ideal of national discipline and before the acknowledgment that the leadership of strong and capable men

will bring the ultimate prosperity of all classes of society."

"This is the Italy of to-day. Americans looked first with curiosity, then with interest, and now look with sympathy to this movement, which expresses so clearly their conception of what should be the individual devotion to the common welfare. It is a return to the full consciousness of national duties; it is a first example of a genuine promise to do all that is humanly possible to restore an era of peace and of prosperity to our tormented world" (*Our World*, February, 1923; quoted in the *Antidote*, New York).

Now we may say certainly that this striking exposition of Fascismo will meet with the support of the Catholic Church in Italy; and when we go on to reflect upon the happy relations of Church and State in that country to-day, and the promise this carries with it for the future; and when, moreover, behind all this and providing a background and support to it, we recognise the unique position of Italy and particularly of Rome in the history of the world, we begin to understand what is meant by Mussolini's movement, and we find ourselves wondering how far beyond the borders of its proper home the influence of Fascismo is likely to spread.

Here is a movement every one of whose characteristic features will bear scrutiny—"the spiritual rather than the material," "discipline," "duty," "strenuous work," "culture for all classes," "courage," "co-operation," "country"—and we are tempted to pause before each one of them as we come to it, and to see in it the very medicine the world is wanting to-day.

On the other hand, while there are still some questions

to be settled between the spiritual and temporal powers in that country,—and time, we trust, will see them settled—when one reflects how the Church which has her centre in Rome numbers some 300,000,000 souls, distributed over the various countries of Europe and beyond it; how she has helped to promote civilisation in the past and sometimes to save it; how in all times and in all places her theory and much of her practice has stood for discipline and devotion, and how she is the “one consistent opponent” of that very Socialism which Mussolini has tasted, but which after “protracted thought” and various experience he has felt himself constrained to withstand—all this opens up a vista of possibilities of which it is not easy to foresee the end.

Meantime for myself, although my own impressions of Fascismo may be of little interest to others, I should like to think they would share them with me when I say how I rejoice over every symptom of approach between the two great powers of Church and State in Italy—powers that have been shy of one another for so many years, and only too often seriously in conflict; and when I go on to say that over every instinct that opens in this great movement, every aspiration that rises in it, every line of conformity to the twin principles of “co-operation” and “country” which is being retraced upon it, I rejoice with all my heart.

## PART V

# THE FASCISTA BAND

### CHAPTER XIV

#### NAME AND NATURE

A CHILD lives before it comes actually to the birth, and we have been able to trace the great movement for the regeneration of Italy, from its very beginning when sticks were used against the strikers as far back as 1904; and thenceforward to the Nationalist Movement under Enrico Corradini in 1910; to the interventionist groups of deputies and senators in the Chamber seven years later, after the Caporetto disaster; and afterwards to the various citizen and other committees scattered about the country, and destined to resolve themselves two years later into the Fascista Band itself.

FASCISMO, FASCISTI, FASCISTA.—This new force, born actually on March 23, 1919, four months after the Armistice, may be identified variously according to the point of view from which we regard it: as *Fascismo*, when we have in mind the philosophy and policy the Band is pursuing; as *Fascisti*, when we are contemplating the men who compose the Band; and as *Fascista*, when we are speaking of the Band as such.

And its title is intended, perhaps, to recall those fasces or bundles of birchrods, with the head of an axe projecting from them and with a strap to bind them together; carried in ancient times by the lictors before the Roman magistrates, as symbols of authority, and sanctions of life and death; the lictors and fasces, indeed, being so inseparable that the terms came to be



synonymous. A band of young men, about 200 in number, fresh from the front and from fighting the enemy outside, and now recalled home to the country itself to fight the enemy within—such was the bundle Mussolini had now taken in hand, a bundle of men bound together by one common purpose—viz., to recall Italy to herself and to stand by their country.

Joined at once by some of their fellows who had been too young for the front, this nucleus was soon to attract to itself professors from the Universities, ex-Army officers of high rank and splendid courage, school-teachers, farmers, working men, and peasants; until the country began to look up in wonder, and to ask what it meant, and whether the moment of Italy's deliverance had come at last—the day when its people would have liberty once again to work, liberty to breathe and to live.

One thing at least was certain: let their grievances be what they might; they were weary to death of strikes, tired of being tyrannised over by strikers, and had come at length to see—what it is so easy for men to miss—that even higher wages and shorter hours are of little avail to workers who are always being stopped in their work, with revolutions constantly coming along their way, and when governments do not often continue in one stay, and have almost given up governing when they do.

They were obliged now to own that even when those who were at the head of things were trying to mend them, they had got matters into such a tangle that they could no longer control the Reds and the Socialists on the one hand, or this new Fascista Band that was daring enough to confront them on the other.

Now, to ask what is the secret of this movement is

really to ask what the secret is of the man who has made himself the master of it. And it would be an impertinence on my part to talk of Mussolini's secret if he had not himself told us what that secret is.

MUSSOLINI'S SECRET.—Like every strong man, he has his likes and his dislikes, although he does not wear his heart on his sleeve, unless you have put a baby into his arms, in which case he will let himself go, for he loves a little child. But what his soul does not love, but loathes, is perfidy, or anything answering to what is commonly known as "a dirty trick"; and bullying he will put up with from no one. His father instilled that lesson into him when quite a boy—never mind who it is or where it comes from: the individual, the party, the class, or the nation; anyone who allows himself to be bullied is a coward.

This, indeed, will serve to explain some of his decisive, nay, almost warlike, utterances of recent days; this it was that made him so angry, a few years ago, on the occasion of a diplomatic visit by an Italian minister to the capital of another country, when the latter, he said, had submitted to treatment at the hands of a foreign minister "of which a representative of San Marino would have been ashamed."

But if he expects much from others he is equally severe with himself; and, as a lady who worked in his office assures us, he would have no easy-chairs or slippers there. "Throw them out of the window at once," he exclaimed.\*

And for the same reason, perhaps, holidays with him signify change of occupation rather than idleness—a sudden rush in a motor-car at seventy miles an hour to

\* See *The Life of Benito Mussolini*, by Margherita G. Sarfatti (Thornton Butterworth, 15, Bedford Street, London).

Milan, for instance, to open a club with a speech or to start a motor race.

In fact, Mussolini's own description of himself is of "one who is always on the move"—swift movement whether of mind or of body; swift in reaching his conclusions, a marvel of rapidity when making up his mind. The past must be detained for a moment, of course, but only for the experience it has to give him; otherwise he has done with it, and his eye is on the future, "forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before," ever pressing on towards the mark.

And it is this severity with himself, this severe self-restraint, that explains his stern and consistent denunciation of reprisals. "With 300,000 armed youths ready at my orders," he exclaimed, referring to the occasion of his March on Rome, "I might have punished all who defamed and tried to break Fascismo. . . . I refused to do so."

Think what this refusal signifies: a mere lift of his little finger would have brought down the full weight of his faithful Band on the head of the culprit who made an attempt on his life in November, 1925, or again in April of the next year; but instantly and sternly he refused to allow it. And when complaint was made to him that many deputies had been forced by the Fascisti to withdraw from their constituencies, he replied at once that orders had been given for "the immediate withdrawal of these bans."

Reprisals on the part of the Fascisti there have been from time to time, of course—severe reprisals, but carried out in the heat of the moment and under severe provocation, and without the sanction of his authority;

and when we look back we find this tendency constantly diminishing with the advance of time.

It is much, indeed, to say of any man that it is just those who are nearest to him and know him best that respect him most; and Mussolini's own people at Predappio had learnt to appreciate this earnestness of purpose even in the earlier days before he had brought them round to his views. "He is wrong," they said, "but he is brave, and he has grit in him. He is putting up a big fight. Bravo, Benito!"

And this discipline which begins so evidently with himself and is reflected in every department of the enterprise stamps the movement as genuine from the outset.

"Ascetic," "abnegation," "renunciation"—such are the terms for every man in the Band to start with, and to carry with him all the way; and this is what he insisted upon when "The Volunteer Militia for National Safety" were instituted by Royal Decree on January 15, 1923. The men were to be unpaid for the most part, except when serving outside their own communes; but, wherever they might be, they must carry with them "a discipline attaining the direct renunciation and the most ascetic abnegation."

But even this does not touch precisely the point I wish to press. A man may do all this, and yet be playing for his own hand; a man may wear himself out with work, and almost bury himself in his own business in order to become a millionaire; but that is not Mussolini either in theory or in fact. His is a poor living, as a clergyman might say, and if he asked what a man was worth he would not expect to be answered in terms of money. "Life," he declares, "is full of duties to be

performed and sorrows to be overcome. Dry up your tears and hide them."

And so, when the vision of Italy's future was opening up before him, it was this sense of duty that made him sure he had come to stay. "Let none of our opponents of yesterday, of to-day, of to-morrow have any illusions as to the briefness of our tenure of office. Our Government has solid foundations in the conscience of the nation, and is supported by the best and youngest generations of Italians." Such is not the confidence of mere bluster or what the schoolboy would call "cheek," but the confidence of one's conscience, which is quite another thing; and language like Mussolini's is too deep for a mere demagogue; there is substance in it, something he shares in common with his countrymen, something which may be, and often is, overlaid and obscured by the weakness or self-interest of men, and which calls for the exercise of power to bring it out and to do justice to it, but which is there nevertheless, always there, and which, if you will but trust it, will never fail you.

And it is Mussolini's secret that he sees this and seizes it: he is here not to flatter the mob, or to play off one class against another in order to keep himself in power. Demagogy had had its day for him, and demagogy was done with. No, his appeal is direct, and deeper far than that—to the conscience of his countrymen; an appeal which is leaving an indelible mark, therefore, upon the Italian nation, illustrating, I think, in a striking manner a famous saying of the great Bishop Butler: "Had conscience strength as it had right, had it power as it had manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world."

## CHAPTER XV

### MUSSOLINI'S MENTALITY

AND when we turn to Mussolini's mentality, we find he has not been a journalist for nothing—a profession, indeed, in which so many distinguished careers have had their training: having to think and also to turn out his thoughts; and, owing to the exigencies of space or of time, sometimes to expand, sometimes to compress them, writing helps to clear the thoughts and to forge an instrument for the journalist's mind, especially where it is a vigorous mind, spurred on, as Mussolini's has been, by the incessant attacks of his enemies, sometimes to the accompaniment of a bomb explosion outside his office, and by what is ever waiting upon an editor—a paper that has to be turned out up to time.

Exercise of this kind, day by day and hour by hour, teaches a writer the use of terms—and their abuse: sooner or later, of course, we must come to terms, and if we do not use them correctly for ourselves, others will abuse them to our disadvantage; but it is one of Mussolini's warnings not to allow our terms to betray us. "Do not be snared," he says, "by terms and phrases." And, as I recognise in this warning one key to his mentality and the explanation of much that might otherwise puzzle us, I shall venture upon some illustrations of it. What I understand him to mean, then, is that men do not always live up to their labels, or down to them; that the movement and change so often going on behind our terms may easily escape us, until we

come to assume, for example, that the "Liberal," as Mussolini found him in 1921, must have been identically the same as the "Liberal" in the days of Cavour seventy years earlier; whereas the country had had a history of its own all along that interval until its terms had come to confuse or conceal rather than to reveal their meaning.

TERMS AND PHRASES.—This passion for reality will serve to explain, I think, what seem to be Mussolini's inconsistencies; and when men ask how he can make his practice square with his profession; how he can talk so much of "liberty" when he seems to be attacking it, or about "Freedom of the Press" when he is putting the Press to silence; how he can profess himself a republican one day and seem to be dabbling with Monarchy the next, perhaps he might reply: "Your eye is resting in the term itself, mine sees through it."

"Government," for example, is a grand term, if the thing is there behind it; but inasmuch as Government is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end, where a Government does not govern, you must exchange it for something else that does. That was why Mussolini quite agreed with those who protested, on the occasion of the March on Rome, that there could not be two Governments in one country. "That is so," he replied, "and as the present Government has ceased to govern it must stand down and leave us to take its place." Men were very nervous, too, at that time about the Monarchy, and what the republican Mussolini would make of the King; but seeing as he did what had been going on behind these terms to rob them of their meaning, and how Italy's King had never had a fair chance of exercising his kingship, "That is

what has made Republicans of us," he said; "we are here to mend the Monarchy so that we may all of us once again become Monarchists." Then follows a precise description: "Monarchy represents the historic continuity of the nation—an admirable function, a task of incalculable importance."

"Liberty," again, is a great word, recalling such epochs in history as that of the Magna Charta of 1215, in England, or of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, in America; but why should Bolsheviks in Italy go about complaining that they are not allowed their liberty, when they are there expressly for the purpose of taking away other people's? Is "Liberty," after all, the proper label for organised plots against the Constitution? "Licence" is the name for this, surely; and you must not get loose with your labels, or you run the risk of waking up when it is too late to find you are drinking poison instead of port. It is idle, surely, for a burglar to protest that he is being robbed of his liberty because he is not allowed to break into my house and to rob me of mine; as if, indeed, there could be genuine negotiation between parties who hold no principles in common, or such a condition as freedom where there are no boundary-lines or laws to determine it.

So again with "Freedom of the Press," which must not be allowed to cover press offences. There are wholesome newspapers in Italy to-day, papers of the highest rank, which praise the policy of Fascismo in some of its aspects and criticise that policy severely in others; and this without any kind of interference from the authorities.

On the other hand, one or two papers had to be suppressed because, metaphorically speaking, they were



spreading disease among the people, or laying mines to blow up the Constitution. Some, again, were suppressed for the moment, and then "handed back to their editorial staff"; while others modified their revolutionary principles or came over frankly to Fascismo. Meantime if Italy as a whole has been coming over gradually to Fascismo it is because Fascismo has restored to her the Fatherland, and with the Fatherland her freedom.

Everyone in Italy, then, who wants his liberty can have it; on the other hand, any individual who insists upon "dabbling in revolutionary politics," which would rob Italy of her freedom, must be prepared to forfeit it.

This is the way to come to terms: "Licence" must not be allowed to pass for "Liberty."

In the same way, I think, Mussolini would say that "working man" is a term that needs watching, and one that may prove a snare. A man conceives a plan and puts it forward as a project; he has a mind to manage it, and money to expend in promoting it. There must be initial outlay in the plant, there are documents to be drawn up, and legal expenses to be met. A contract is entered into between himself and other freemen; he agrees upon the wages he is to pay them, and after paying out the wages there is a surplus in hand. If we say that only those are "working men" who receive the wages, the term "working man" has become a snare to us; for while the mechanics have their "hours of work," the organising mind is at work perhaps all the time; nor can the other minds get on without that mind. Is not Mussolini himself a "working man"?

In shedding the crude Socialism of his earlier days, then, Mussolini did not go over from "Labour" to "Capital," but took his stand upon higher ground that

gave him a better view of both, and where the entire question could be seen in its true perspective.

The country as such is the concern of all classes, all classes should care for it, and all classes in the end are likely to benefit where the country benefits. It is only putting the machinery out of gear, then, when you favour one class at the expense of the others, by fawning upon the rich or by flattering the poor—Fascismo has no more use for the "idle rich" than for the "idle poor"—but the point is to ascertain the measure and quality of power that you have in the country, and then to wind up the great machine of production and to get everybody going.

CO-OPERATION, NOT CLASS WARFARE.—This came out clearly at the Congress of the Fascista Syndicalist Corporations at Bologna in 1922, when the purpose was to constitute a National Confederation of these bodies, and when two points especially were pressed :

1. That they were "uniting, under the symbol of the Italian flag, citizens of both sexes, all social classes and all categories of intellectual and manual labour."

2. That "the dynamic law of civil history does not consist of warfare between classes—i.e., between the various social functions; and still less of the collaboration of classes which is a confusion of functions, but is constituted by the struggle of capacities; that is to say, the struggle of the groups of the lower classes who have acquired the capacity of fulfilling the functions of the upper classes, who in their turn have lost the qualities corresponding to the functions of their own class."

In other words, "the lower classes must struggle upwards and not pull the upper classes downwards." The general features of Fascismo are pictured out for us in this passage—viz. :

(a) "The Italian flag," as the symbol waving over citizens of every type and condition.

(b) "Labour," broadened out so as to include the head as well as the hand—the strain and effort of the mind as well as the use of the spade, the fork, or the wheel.

(c) "Subordination," arising out of an inequality of power—a condition which confronts and contradicts the tendency of a Socialism which attempts to ignore it and to lump together all classes and individuals on one level.

A full treatment of this position may be found in Chapters XII. and XIII. of Luigi Villari's *Awakening of Italy*.

Meantime the point to press here is that every Italian now is provided with two plain terms—viz., "country" and "co-operation"; to be inscribed, so to say, over the entrance to his cottage, his club, or his castle—terms which may teach him that there is something for all to share in common—namely, a love of one's country; and something to minister to that country's good, and in doing so to the good of every individual in it—viz., the spirit of co-operation and goodwill.

## CONCLUSION

FINALLY, in turning once again to Mussolini himself, what strikes me most of all is not the powerful intellect that is at work all the time, or the number of portfolios he takes in hand, with the amazing power of work he puts into them; or even the lofty standard of discipline, duty, and self-restraint that he insists upon for himself as well as for others—not so much this as the intensity of conviction on his part that his cause is just, and that he has the conscience of his country with him throughout; a conviction that stamps his enterprise with a unity of direction that renders it wellnigh irresistible, and that serves at once to sustain himself in the stupendous task to which he has put his hand, and to inspire his fellow-countrymen with confidence; a force of conviction which recalls to my mind a famous passage in Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, where the Cardinal shows how rare this condition is, and what a sure mark of greatness it carries with it:

“Real assents, are sometimes called beliefs, convictions, certitudes; and, as given to moral objects, they are perhaps as rare as they are powerful. Till we have them, in spite of a full apprehension and assent in the field of notions, we have no intellectual moorings, and are at the mercy of impulses, fancies, and wandering lights, whether as regards personal conduct, social and political action, or religion. These beliefs, be they true or false in the particular case, form the mind out of which they grow, and impart

to it a seriousness and manliness which inspires in other minds a confidence in its views, and is one secret of persuasiveness and influence in the public stage of the world. They create, as the case may be, heroes and saints, great leaders, statesmen, preachers, and reformers. . . . They have given to the world men of one idea, of immense energy, of adamant will, of revolutionary power. They kindle sympathies between man and man, and knit together the innumerable units which constitute a race and a nation. They become the principle of its political existence; they impart to it homogeneity of thought and fellowship of purpose'' (*Grammar of Assent*, p. 88).

## APPENDICES

### I. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF THE "MORNING POST,"

*December 9, 1925*

1. SIR,—The best answer to Mr. —'s inaccurate speech at —, where he declares Mussolini "to be the inspiration, the head, and trunk of terrible outrages perpetrated on the Italian working classes," is that the appeal to the Italian nation to subscribe one dollar per head towards the payment of the national debt to America was originated at a meeting of Genoese dock labourers. It was approved of three days later by Mussolini, who said he would like the fund to reach one million dollars, each donation not to exceed one dollar, by December 1.

On this date the fund had already reached four millions. Ninety-six per cent. of the railway employees have subscribed, and similar percentages have been reached by most big industrial establishments.

These facts prove that Mr. —'s statements as to the feeling of the Italian working man are absolutely inaccurate.

Yours, etc.,

GERTRUDE M. CARTER.

Villa Ombrosa,  
Livorno, Italy,  
*December 3 (1925).*

2. SIR,—Any intelligent and observant foreigner residing in Italy and not merely travelling through could tell Mr. — that he is labouring under a delusion. It is not under Mussolini's Government that the working classes are being shamelessly robbed of their money. That happened when the Socialists reigned. Except for a few renegades all Italians, and especially the working classes, are with Mussolini. No better proof could be given than their admirable voluntary contribution towards the fund for paying the war debt to America. The Florence railwaymen alone have given over a million.

Mr. — need not worry himself unduly about the Italian working classes, who do not feel that they are living through a nightmare, but realise that with Mussolini's strong and capable Government they are awakening from the long and terrible nightmare which lasted from 1919 till October, 1922. I have lived in Italy all my life, and know the people well.

Yours, etc.,

MAURICE RAY.

Florence,

*December 2 (1925).*

## II. THE COMMITTEE OF CORRECT REPORTS ON ITALIAN AFFAIRS

14, Via Vigna Nuova,  
Florence,  
Italy.

We, the undersigned members of the British Colony in Florence, claiming collectively by long experience and intimate relations with Italians of all classes to

know more of public opinion in this country than any single newspaper correspondent can possibly do, desire to protest in the strongest possible terms against the manner in which the state of public affairs in Italy has for a considerable time past been misrepresented to a large and important section of the British Press. As guests in this country, we make no comment on its internal political policy, which is not our concern, but we wish to state most clearly and emphatically that there exists here to-day nothing that can be justly termed either tyranny or suppression of personal freedom as guaranteed by constitutional law in any civilised land. We believe that the present Prime Minister, Signor Mussolini, enjoys the enthusiastic support and admiration of the vast majority of the Italian people, who are patriotically co-operating with him in building up the economic welfare of the country and are contented, orderly and prosperous to a degree hitherto unknown in Italy and probably without parallel at the present time among other great European nations still suffering from the war.

(Signed) GEORGE DICK-LAUDER (*Chairman*),  
W. F. COPINGER,  
T. DALRYMPLE DUNCAN,  
HAROLD E. GOAD,  
W. P. HENDERSON,  
SERRETT LAWLESS,  
ALGERNON I. PILKINGTON,  
R. W. SPRANGER,  
ERNEST TAYLOR,  
R. E. WORTHINGTON.

*April 8 (1926).*



## III. LECTURE BY SIR WALTER BECKER, K.B.E.

" In an illuminating address to the Mentone Literary Circle, Sir Walter Becker said : ' Mussolini is a morally and physically fearless man, free from all taint of self-interest ; a practical idealist, having a native dignity of bearing, a certain detachedness and proud aloofness, yet courteous, kindly, and human in intercourse. . . . Fascismo is a revolt against the Trade Unions' tyranny, which in other countries embitters the relations between the classes and undermines national prosperity. Fascismo stands for discipline and collaboration, and consequently the abolition of class war ' " (Lecture quoted in the *Morning Post*, April 20, 1926).

NOTE.—In the two letters addressed to the *Morning Post*, and quoted above, I have omitted names where the mention of them might make mischief.—S. J.

## IV. A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The Awakening of Italy: The Fascista Regeneration*, by Luigi Villari. 10s. 6d. Methuen.
- The Fascist Experiment*, by Luigi Villari. 12s. 6d. Methuen.
- The Life of Benito Mussolini*, by Margherita G. Sarfatti. 15s. Butterworth.
- The Shadow of Mussolini*, by Mrs. Wilfrid Ward. 7s. 6d. Sheed and Ward.
- A Dreamer in Christendom*, by Algernon Cecil. (Pp. 214-262.) 7s. 6d. Bell and Sons.



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